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ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLEPLAYING GAMES

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1998
ISSUE #71

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight, over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding—
Riding—riding—
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.
— Alfred Noyes, *The Highwayman*

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Editorial

Waking the Editor

Shhh!

Chris is asleep, and I don't want to wake him until I've finished changing his editorial for this issue. I've gotta hurry, because his snoring is apt to summon the building and grounds people at any moment.

It's all your fault, really, those of you who send in clichéd manuscripts without considering the ramifications. It's all very well to submit a *good* adventure. No one minds *that*. Without the good ones, what would we publish?

The problem is with those *other* adventures. Chris is aware of the problem and has begun taking the submissions home so he can read them in bed, where he can fall asleep without offending anybody. Every once in a while he forgets, and we find him slanted across his chair, mouth gaping at the ceiling. The guilty manuscripts lie there at his stocking feet. We daren't look at them for long, fearing that Pierce would catch us all aslumber in Chris's cube and sack the lot of us.

Chris has even told us which ones have this singular narcotic effect on him. Usually they start with an evil wizard who opens a gate to the abyss, or perhaps a marauding band of humanoids who have captured the king's daughter. I recognized them at once, for I remember waking up more than once with the first page of a bad adventure impressed backward on my cheek.

So it's up to you to help. Save our jobs and Chris's consciousness by sending more of the good adventures and fewer of the snoozers.
I'll even help.

Here are a few tips for writing an adventure that, properly administered, can't possibly put Chris to sleep:

1. Be brief. True, Chris sometimes goes down on the very first page, but more often it's on the fortieth. Also, we never see enough short modules.

2. Write an adventure with an unusual hook. For instance, how about writing an adventure that starts only *after* the heroes have opened the *wizard-locked* chest they found in their previous adventure? Likewise, how about an adventure that starts when a captive the PCs rescued in a previous adventure tells them the original source of his woes? You can do better than either of these ideas. Try it!

3. Start an adventure somewhere other than an inn. Really. I'm not kidding. No, you can't put a new twist on it. If you can't let go of the mysterious NPC who "desperately needs the party's help," just don't even send it in. Trust me.

4. Try an adventure that requires no combat. That's not to say there shouldn't be action, but see whether you can come up with a playable adventure that depends on good use of proficiencies and roleplaying instead of long swords and *fireballs*.

5. Offer us a good antagonist. I mean a virtuous one—a good guy who's doing the wrong thing for the right reasons. The trick for our heroes is to prove to him that he's wrong and set him on the right course.

Chris just moved, so I'm outta here. See you over in that other magazine!

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Dungeon®
ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

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The editors of *Dungeon Adventures* would like to thank this issue's contributing artists and cartographers: Diesel, Steve Bryant, Stephen Daniele, Terry Dykstra, Robert Klasnich, Bradley McDevitt, Aaron Williams, Craig Zipse, and Tony DiTerlizzi.

Letters

Send us presents, or just tell us what's on your mind. Write to "Letters," DUNGEON® Adventures, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055. You can also send email to our address: **dungeon@wizards.com**. *Please forward subscription questions and change of address notices to* DUNGEON Adventures, *Subscriptions, P.O. Box 469106, Escondido, CA 92046-9106. Email:* **dungeon@pcspublink.com**. *Toll-free phone number: 1-800-395-7760.*

Skullduggery

It was with interest that I read "The Ice Tyrant" (Issue #65) and "Convergence" (Issue #68). These two adventures, written for the FIFTH AGE® and ALTERNITY® games respectively, are the first of their kind to be published in the magazine, as were "Umbra" (Issue #55) and "Seeking Bloodsilver" (Issue #59) for the PLANESCAPE® and BIRTHRIGHT® settings. Strangely, all of these adventures were written by none other than Mr. Chris Perkins. Are we to believe that Mr. Perkins runs a home campaign in each of these settings and was fortunate enough to be the first person to get a module published in each of these settings? Or perhaps the conspiracy I outlined in my Issue #63 letter is alive and well? To recap, I accused the magazine of publishing modules that were not the earnest efforts of hopeful amateurs, but rather modules designed to plug TSR's latest products. Furthermore, I suggested that these modules were being written from scratch upon request by Those In Authority. If this is so, I suspect that these adventures stood an almost certain chance of being accepted for publication and could thus be keeping the potentially superior works of others out of the magazine.

It was with amusement that I learned of Mr. Perkins' appointment to the position of editor, as I had suggested that he was chosen for the covert operation because he was an established author trying to obtain a job at TSR. However, even I did not appreciate the true height of his ambition. May we now hope that there will be an end to this skullduggery, to give new authors a chance to get published? May I also tentatively suggest that Mr. Perkins refrain from publishing his own adventures in the magazine, as this could be seen as unethical behavior and would leave him open to accusations of abuse of his powers.

Please print this letter. At least I will have succeeded in my mission to expose the truth. This will be my solace as I await The Visit from TSR operatives and my proposals returned inexplicably stamped "Rejected."

The truth is still out there.

Alexander Roy
Derby, Derbyshire
United Kingdom

I suppose there's no point hiding it any longer. Chris Perkins is, in fact, the magazine's only contributor. All of the other names that have appeared in DUNGEON Adventures *over the last 13 years are actually pseudonyms. Chris would like to dedicate this latest issue of his adventures to none other than himself—undoubtedly the greatest inspiration in his life.*

Athas Adventures?

There are two things I wanted to say. First, I loved "Sleep of Ages" and "Slave Vats of the Yuan-ti" (Issue #69) and plan to use both adventures. Second, I was hoping you'd print some DARK SUN® modules. I'd like to run a DARK SUN campaign, but I don't have the time to make my own adventures.

David Rybacki
via email

We have no DARK SUN adventures in inventory, but maybe Chris will write something ...

Goldmine of Ideas

For a considerable time now, the letters page has contained a sometimes heated debate about "wasted pages" and "unusable adventures." It seemed to start with "Umbra" (Issue #55). Although I have never run a PLANESCAPE campaign, I obtained as many good ideas from that adventure as I did from any other. Similarly, I have no *direct* use for anything written specifically for SPELLJAMMER®, AL-QADIM®, BIRTHRIGHT, DRAGONLANCE®, or DARK SUN, and I refuse to let psionics anywhere near my campaign. This does not prevent me from borrowing ideas from those adventures. For example, I really liked the idea of a fortress existing simultaneously on two planes, ruined on one yet fully active and intact on the other (see "Seeking Bloodsilver," a BIRTHRIGHT adventure, in Issue #59).

Perhaps I look at the magazine differently than some people. I do not expect adventures that I can plug into my campaign exactly as they are, but instead I treat each one as a pool of ideas. I might use the plot from one adventure, an encounter or two from another, the setting from a third, and join them together with some of my own ideas to create a completely new adventure set in a campaign world that none of the published adventures was intended for. I rarely use any adventure exactly as published, except as a one-off whenever the absence of key players prevents us from progressing with the regular campaign.

To anyone who feels cheated by the appearance of lengthy, world-specific adventures, I would like to suggest reading these adventures again, looking at them in terms of individual scenes, rooms, traps, characters, and storylines. Often, the last few paragraphs that suggest spin-off adventures are a goldmine of ideas.

Before closing, I would like to add my name to the list of people who think that *DUNGEON Adventures* should go monthly. It's a great magazine and an excellent value for the money. Six a year is good, and 12 would be even better!

Peter Lloyd-lee
Woking, Surrey, UK

AL-QADIM Modules

I recently bought the *Arabian Adventures* sourcebook and *City of Delights* boxed set, and I'm really looking forward to playing them. Is it true that TSR is no longer producing AL-QADIM adventures and accessories? Even if AL-QADIM is just a memory, I would like it if you published some good-sized AL-QADIM adventures in your next issues. The "Al-Kandil" SideTrek in Issue #68 was okay, and it's good to have some of those nearby when mastering the setting.

As I do not have direct access to the Internet, I've been unable to visit the TSR website to look for AL-QADIM adventures in old back issues, so it would be nice if you could give me some of the issue numbers that contain AL-QADIM adventures. Thanks.

Johannes Sørensen
Iceland

No campaign setting truly dies, as evidenced by the recent resurrection of the GREYHAWK campaign. For those who enjoy the AL-QADIM setting, the RPGA® Network recently released a self-contained AL-QADIM module titled Reunion.

The following feature-length AL-QADIM adventures have been published in DUNGEON to date: "The Assassin Within" (Issue #47), "The Last Oasis" (Issue #51), "The Rose of Jumlat" (Issue #57), and "Blood & Fire" (Issue #63). "The Object of Desire" (Issue #50), while not specifically an AL-QADIM adventure, fits nicely into the Arabian milieu. Many of these back issues are still available. For more information, check out the DUNGEON Adventures *back issues order form on page 7.*

AD&D vs. ALTERNITY

Hi. Remember me from "Letters" in Issue #1? Well, I'm still here, having just renewed my subscription for another year of awesome adventures. I have been driven to write in response to Issue #68. I like most of the new ideas you are implementing. The mini-series idea is great, as long as you keep it to no more than one series at a time and keep the series short (3–5 modules). Maps of Mystery is also a winner, with lots of scope for urban sites, small villages, castles, and dungeons. Of course, nothing beats the *deck of many things* from *DRAGON Magazine* a ways back. (A black-and-white version of the deck appeared in *DUNGEON Adventures*, Issue #19.)

The key to the magazine's success has been your ability to provide a balanced mix of high quality, entertaining AD&D adventures to devoted fans like me. You have always been careful to poll readers, listen to feedback, and tailor your magazine accordingly. This brings me back to Issue #68. I realize that TSR—and now WotC—has a lot invested in the new ALTERNITY game. It looks like a great game, with a nifty core mechanic. However, I resent what I perceive as TSR's plan to use *DUNGEON Adventures* to thrust the ALTERNITY game into the spotlight. You told us in Issue #1 that *DUNGEON* would be reserved for the AD&D and D&D® games, and you have held that line through all your previous surveys and reviews. Amid the friendly wrangling over short and long adventures, generic or world-specific, high or low level, the one constant throughout the magazine's history has been the focus on AD&D.

DUNGEON Adventures is, without a doubt, the best gaming product in the entire TSR line—and yes, the competition is pretty fierce! Perhaps a future "ALTERNITY Explorations" magazine will give it a run for its money, but in the meantime, please keep *DUNGEON Adventures* non-AD&D free.

Jay G. Simpson
Orleans, Ontario

The Flip Side

I just received my copy of Issue #70 in the mail. As is my normal habit, I flipped through the entire magazine once before reading any article. I was happy to see another Map of Mystery. I think this is a great addition to a great magazine. Over time, the inventory of different maps will prove invaluable to my campaign. I think the idea could be made even better if the flip side were added. Instead of just providing a generic map, what about providing a generic plot? As a DM, coming up with fresh ideas is one of the hardest things to do (at least for me). Having maps to use inside a story is great, but it all starts with the story. Keep up the great work.

Paul Jurgens
via email

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A thief escapes with Phaulkon's Chalice under the cloak of night.

PRIESTLY SECRETS

BY W. JASON PECK

Something's rotten in Restenford!

Artwork & Cartography by Stephen Daniele

Jason is 27 years old and would like to thank his wife, Veronica, for believing in his dream, and DUNGEON® Adventures, *for giving his English degree some meaning. This is Jason's second appearance in the magazine.*

"Priestly Secrets" is an AD&D® GREYHAWK® adventure designed for 4–6 characters of levels 2–4 (about 16 total levels). The party should consist of an assortment of character classes with at least two warriors and a priest who can turn undead. Spells such as *protection from evil, invisibility to undead*, and *bless* are particularly useful.

The adventure is set in the town of Restenford but with a little work can be adapted to fit almost any setting that features pirates (or once did). This town was first introduced in the classic modules L1: *The Secret of Bone Hill* and L2: *The Assassin's Knot*. These modules are not necessary to run this adventure, but the DM may find them useful for background information.

Should the DM wish to run this as the third adventure in that series, he need only make a few adjustments to allow for the state of the town of Restenford as it is presented here. In particular, the DM should arrange for some time to pass between this adventure and *The Assassin's Knot* (instead of the five years presented here) to allow for the changes brought about by Andrella becoming Baroness.

Adventure Background

Restenford has always been a town of free spirited people. Indeed, most of Lendore Isle is populated by folk of similar views. Although the island is ruled by a noble class, these nobles generally share the people's love of freedom and few inhibiting laws. But five years ago, a series of tragic events changed the people of Restenford forever.

The first to change was Andrella Restenford. Upon assuming the mantle of Baroness, she has pushed for a more ordered and structured way of life. Her reasons stem from the first days of her reign, five years ago, when her father was killed by assassins in the employ of a mad abbot from the Phaulkon Abbey (see L2: *The Assassin's Knot* for details). The

abbot dreamed of ruling Restenford with Andrella as his bride. This mad scheme was eventually foiled by hired adventurers, but not before the Baroness Fairwind Restenford had also been killed and a young, bitter Andrella had been left to rule alone.

These events have left Andrella Restenford hard and untrusting. But rather than allowing these emotions drag her down, Andrella has used them to fire her spirit and develop an independent personality. Unlike her parents, she has worked to make Restenford a more structured and lawful environment.

What Andrella could do without oppressing the people, she has done. Some changes to the local government that Andrella wanted to implement, however, were simply impossible to do without displeasing a large segment of the people. Mostly these changes concern the sorcerer Pelltar and the newest abbot of the Phaulkon Abbey, Father Sedrick. Both serve the Baroness as advisors as well as represent the people. Andrella blames the Phaulkon Abbey for the deaths of her parents and Pelltar for being unable (or unwilling) to save them. Unfortunately, the people love them, seeing them as benefactors and protectors.

Two years ago, Restenford was attacked by pirates. Three ships anchored off the coast and simply put ashore en masse. Restenford was ill-prepared for such an attack, with incomplete defenses and an uncoordinated populace. The town was saved due only to the combined efforts of the priests of Phaulkon, the sorcerer Pelltar, and Andrella's organized men-at-arms. Castle Restenford was attacked repeatedly, but its walls were never breached. The pirates did, however, plunder and lay waste to much of the rest of the town.

In the end, after two days of battle and destruction, the pirates withdrew with heavy losses. The price of victory for Restenford, however, was very costly. More than half of the town's male population were slain, and many homes and shops were destroyed.

In the wake of this catastrophe, many have learned the wisdom of the ideas Andrella has suggested for so long. In fact, many townsfolk believe that were it not for the changes Andrella had already implemented, the town would have been lost. In any case, Andrella finally began to have the support she always wanted, and she has wasted no time in using it to begin Restenford's transformation into a safe, lawful community. She has repaired and completed the wooden palisade so that it totally encircles the town, built a bigger fortress-like lighthouse to replace the one destroyed in the pirate attack, and helped many of the poorer families in town rebuild their homes and businesses. In general, the populace has been very receptive to these changes and, as a result, the town has not only begun to recover, but to prosper.

For Andrella, all seemed to be going well until recently. The people of Restenford are growing afraid. Danger wanders their town in broad daylight in the form of packs of giant rats who chase after children and stray dogs, boldly attacking anyone they can catch. These animals are mangy, almost skeletal in appearance, and have been witnessed fighting among themselves over small scraps of food. Only large groups of Andrella's men-at-arms have been able to beat off these packs. Even then the result is always the same—the pack is dispersed with only a few rats actually slain, and within hours the pack reforms to continue its rampage somewhere else in town.

The nights in Restenford have become even worse. The townsfolk sit hunkered down in their homes with all windows and doors securely bolted shut. The sounds of the chittering rats and other things stirring in the streets outside continue throughout the night. But there are also long periods of stillness and absolute silence, as if the rats had suddenly disappeared. In addition, some claim to have also seen dark skulking figures in the shadows.

In the meantime, the blame is shifting in Andrella's direction. Some claim that the recent theft of a holy chalice from the Phaulkon mortuary has unleashed a curse. Others insist that the sorcerer Pelltar has gone mad and is using his magics to despoil the town. Whatever the cause, many are pointing to the fact that the Baroness' new defenses are proving ineffective.

Andrella considers the whole situation ridiculous. Her temper is boiling over, and she is tired of whining priests, rampaging rats and, most of all, reports of failure to end this madness from the town guard. She is galled that all her defensive measures and trained troops are unable to put an end to a pack of mangy rats. Yet, despite the outward silliness of the situation, she cannot help but feel that something sinister is lurking behind the scenes. Whatever the case, the whole affair is quickly getting out of hand. If something isn't done soon, everything she has built will be swept away. Therefore, though she loathes to heed the advice of Father Sedrick, Andrella has decided to seek professional aid. Sometime this week, the ship *Whale's Teeth* is due to drop off passengers and supplies. It is common for adventurers and sell-swords to arrive upon this ship. If and when they do, she intends to make them an offer they cannot refuse.

For the Dungeon Master

Andrella's instincts are correct; something darker does lurk behind the obvious threats facing the town. The menacing rat packs are only a symptom of a much more dangerous evil, an evil accidentally revived from Restenford's ancient past. As was the case ten years before, Restenford's troubles all begin with the Phaulkon Abbey. Brother Selmo, one of the abbey priests, had only good intentions, but his brash methods and ignorance of past events have led to the present troubles.

Brother Selmo is responsible for all the bookkeeping at the abbey. Because of this, Selmo is one of the few individuals in town who knows the financial burden that the past decade has put upon the abbey. Phaulkon's Abbey is on the verge of bankruptcy. Fearful for the future of his order, Selmo took it upon himself to alleviate the abbey's financial woes. Because he kept the abbey's books, Selmo has access to much of his order's knowledge and secrets. He became aware that in the past, when the town was new to the island, his order had practiced the rite of entombing the deceased priests in a series of catacombs along with their

Phaulkon's Holy Chalice

This magical relic of the Phaulkon order is really little more than an ancient symbol of the order's vanishing prestige. The chalice is 12" tall and 6" in diameter. It is made from solid iron and is slightly rusted along its edges. The chalice is plain except for the tiny symbol of a sun vanishing beneath the waves on its side. This shabby appearance kept it from being stolen when the morgue was pillaged during the pirate raid two years ago. Its only magical power is that it radiates a *protection from evil* aura around it for a distance to 20 feet. Evil beings from other planes as well as some evil creatures from this plane, such as ghouls and even ghasts, cannot willingly enter this aura. The holy chalice is worth 500 gp.

material possessions. This practice waned as the town expanded and a formal graveyard was established. The original catacombs were sealed and forgotten.

Selmo's plan was simple. He intended to locate these crypts and remove some of the wealth interred with his ancient brothers. He would use this wealth to assure the abbey's continuance. He convinced himself that any wealth in the crypts was the property of the abbey and that times were desperate. He would deal with questions concerning where these new funds were coming from if and when they came up. All that mattered was that the abbey would cease to decline.

With a little research, Brother Selmo found a fragment of a previous abbot's journals. This fragment contained an obscure reference to a complex of catacombs that were located directly beneath the present-day mortuary. The journal also made reference to a holy chalice that was to be set in a shrine above the entrance to these tunnels. This chalice would serve as a magical key, locking and unlocking the secret trap door. In present times, the shrine is only a small part of an expanded mortuary that serves the community. The shrine has never been moved and its chalice still remains in its place of honor ... though its real purpose is long forgotten. With a great deal of difficulty, Selmo discovered the trap door but could not open it without removing the holy chalice.

Once Selmo learned of the chalice's pivotal role in opening the catacombs, he quickly decided to remove it. Working late at the mortuary one evening, he waited until the other priests had left and then he removed the chalice, hiding it amid some ruined buildings in the southeast part of town. He allowed the other priests to believe it was stolen. After all, there would be plenty of time to retrieve it once the order was prospering again.

In one night, Selmo unsealed the catacombs and set his plan in motion. Unfortunately, the catacombs he had unsealed were not the ancient burial crypts of the Phaulkon Abbey but ancient tunnels constructed by pirates long ago in a time far predating the Phaulkon Abbey. When the town was first founded here, the original priests of the Phaulkon Abbey stumbled upon these catacombs. The Phaulkon order was new to this region, and the priests were too weak and too few to completely destroy the undead menaces within. Instead, they decided to seal the catacombs using a holy chalice that they had brought with them from the mainland. They intended to deal with the remaining evil lurking below the town when the order became stronger, but the passage of time allowed the secret to simply be
forgotten.

Though forgotten, the evil below Restenford has not gone away. The recent problems the town has suffered are all due to the release of three ghasts from the catacombs beneath the mortuary. These horrors have driven the rats from their warrens and into the streets, where they brave armed men, and even fire, rather than face the unnatural undead. But when the sun goes down, the ghasts prowl the streets, further tormenting the rats and seeking the flesh of the unwary.

Unaware of the evil he had unleashed, Brother Selmo gathered together his gear and spent five days planning his secret foray into the catacombs. But over those few days his own actions began to trouble him; one lie snowballed into the next. He could only keep focussed by promising himself that the abbey would be better off in the end. Though disturbed by the recent events in town, Selmo resolved himself to his plan and, on the night before the PCs arrive in town, he descended into the trap door. He has yet to return, and now the mysterious disappearance of one of the priests of Phaulkon has been added to the list of troubles plaguing Restenford.

Arrival in Restenford

The PCs arrive in Restenford seven days after Selmo stole the chalice from the Phaulkon mortuary. The DM should read or paraphrase the boxed text below when the adventurers first arrive in town. It should be noted that the text assumes that the adventurers arrive in Restenford via the *Whale's Teeth*.

If the DM wishes the PCs to arrive by some other means, the following encounter should be changed to suit the circumstances.

A soft breeze blows across your boat as the oarsmen turn it into the Restin River and toward the docks of Restenford. The wind does little to quell the heat, but at least it sweeps away some of the more unpleasant odors caused by a boatload of men. After three weeks of sea travel, it will be good to have solid, steady earth under your feet again.

The midday's sun seems oddly out of place shining down upon the squat wooden buildings that line the river's shores. The streets are empty, and even the small copses of trees that divide the buildings from one another seem devoid of life. The town is quiet, and only the harsh sound of the pulling oars breaks the eerie silence.

Your longboat passes beneath a wooden bridge and continues up the river for several moments before pulling up to a series of wooden docks that jut out from a riverside tavern. A large wooden sign proclaims this to be "Falco's Tavern." As the crew of the *Whale's Teeth* begin to tie up the boat, a stark scream shatters the town's grim silence.

The scream, sounding like it came from a young girl, originated from a small copse across the river (directly east of area **2**). The first scream is followed by many more and coupled with the sounds of two dogs barking.

The sailors of the *Whale's Teeth* ignore the screams and begin unloading cargo from the longboat. A moment later, a large red-haired dwarf emerges from the tavern to assist the sailors. He, too, ignores the screams. If the PCs wish to respond, they are on their own. The sailors refuse to allow the PCs to take the longboat if they are asked. If threatened with violence, however, they back down after a short tension-building pause, allowing the PCs to take the boat. The sailors will not accompany the PCs, and the dwarven barkeep (Falco) bluntly tells the PCs that they are responsible for the cargo still aboard the longboat. If the PCs leave the sailors to their task and instead look for another boat tied to the docks, they may choose from several rowboats. No one attempts to stop them from taking any of these boats.

PCs who take a boat and rush off to investigate the screams should be allowed to cross the river with little difficulty, even if none of them has any skills associated with boats or the water. Once the adventurers are ashore, the DM should read or paraphrase the following:

> A young girl dressed in a ragged, brown dress stands with her back to a tree in a small clearing. She screams frantically while beating a stick at a pack of dog-sized rats that swarm about her. Two mangy hounds snarl and bite at the rats, keeping most of the pack away from the girl.

This young girl is Sandra, a smart little urchin who lives in Restenford's streets. She lives by her nimble fingers and wits, with only her pet strays for companionship. Life has become increasingly dangerous for her in the past week, and this encounter is genuinely perilous. If the PCs charge to her rescue, she slowly and quietly slips away, using her stray dogs, Nattie and Cap, to cover her escape.

Any PCs entering the clearing are immediately attacked by the rats who turn en masse to respond to this new threat, leaving Sandra unmolested and only one or two rats to attack the dogs. There are 12 giant rats and unlike most of their kind, the pack need not check morale until two-thirds of their number have been slain. Indeed, they attack viciously, ignoring even fire in their attempts to drag down their opponents. In addition, four rogue osquips are mixed into the pack. Though osquips do not normally mix with giant rats, these specimens are especially stupid and believe they are giant rats (exceptionally vicious giant rats). If the PCs attempt to bypass this encounter via a *sleep* spell or some similar means, then the DM is encouraged to have another pack of 12 rats emerge from the trees while the PCs are tending to the incapacitated rats. It should be noted that were a *sleep* spell cast, the rats would succumb first due to their lower hit dice. In addition, Sandra is allowed a save vs. spell to throw off the effects due to the magical medallion (see Sandra's statistics below) that she found a year ago in the ruins of the south-east part of town.

This encounter serves to introduce the PCs to one of Restenford's major problems as well as to a character that may become important later in the adventure. If they slay the rats, the PCs will probably be just in time to see Nattie and Cap (if they are still alive) bark a few times before bounding away into the trees. There is no sign of the young girl. If, however, the PCs state that they wish to keep an eye on the girl during the combat or they specifically take some other action in an effort to capture her, then they might be able to question her afterward.

Sandra is aware that Brother Selmo hid the Holy Chalice of Phaulkon in some ruins in the south-east end of town. However, she is ignorant of Selmo's identity or the true value of the chalice. After watching the priest hide the chalice, Sandra took it for herself and now uses it to drink from the river. Because of the chalice's weight, Sandra stores it in her hideout (see area **5** in the "Town of Restenford" section). Sandra volunteers none of this information, however, nor does she have any idea what is behind the recent rat infestation if asked. She merely thanks the PCs for saving her and then leaves, assuming the PCs allow her to do so. (If not, she sneaks away as soon as they take their eyes off her.) If the PCs are kind to her, perhaps offering food or healing her wounds or those of her dogs (if they incurred any), then it is possible to befriend Sandra. In such a case, the PCs may learn all she knows later on when they need to.

If the PCs chose to ignore the screams like everyone else at the beginning of this encounter, then the DM is encouraged to continue describing them for the next five minutes of game time until they finally end in a pained wail. The PCs should feel guilty and very unheroic and the DM should make them feel uncomfortable with their decision. In this case the outcome of the encounter is that both Nattie and Cap are slain, along with three giant rats, but Sandra escapes by climbing a tree. PCs who later investigate the scene find the gnawed remains of the dogs and rats alike strewn amid the trees. The DM should stage an ambush of 12 giant rats (and their stupid osquip companions) at the first available opportunity. It should be remembered that the time and place do not matter as long as it is outdoors.

Sandra (2nd-level human thief): AL NG; AC 8; MV 12; T2; hp 7; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 7, D 16, C 13, I 12, W 13, Ch 10; ML 10; rogue skills: PP 45%, OL 20%, F/RT 10%, MS 30%, DN 15%, CW 75%, RL 0%; *medallion of sleep resistance* (grants the wearer a save vs. sleep as a 6th-level wizard), knife, stick, soiled brown dress, small leather pouch containing 5 gp, 4 sp, and 11 cp.

Nattie and **Cap** (wild dogs): INT semi; AL N; AC7; MV 15; HD 1+1; hp 6, 4; THACO 19, #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SZ S; ML 7; *MM*/57.

Giant rats (12): INT semi-; AL NE; AC 7; MV 12, Sw 6; HD ½; hp 2 each; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1–3; SA disease; SZ T; ML 4 (see above); XP 7; *MM*/300.

Osquips (4): INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 12, Burrow ½; HD 3+1; hp 19, 16, 12, 10; THACO 16; #AT 1; Dmg 2–12; SZ S; ML 7 (see above); XP 120; *MM*/300 (rat).

Rumors in Restenford

1. Pirates have struck again, only this time by stealth. They came in the night and stole the holy chalice of Phaulkon right from under the priests' noses. (False)

2. The sorcerer Pelltar is responsible for this plague of rats. He has gone mad and has unleashed terrible experiments upon us. (False)

3. I saw the priest Selmo skulking down by the southern wall last night. He followed a pack of giant rats until they disappeared into some bushes. Then he transformed into a huge rat and scurried in after them. (Partially true; he/she did see Selmo by the southern wall. The priest disappeared into some bushes, but Selmo did not transform into a rat.)

4. Sea devils walk the streets at night, hunting both the rats and the townsfolk! (False)

5. All these bad things happening to our town are due to a curse, a curse brought upon us by those adventurers who disturbed the ruins of the old guard house by the river five years ago. I warned them to leave the dead in peace! (False)

6. There's a troll lurking under the south bridge. I saw it three nights ago crawling back under there. (False; it was Sandra.)

7. There's a hidden treasure buried in the ruins of the old guardhouse by the river. A brave man might be able to take advantage of all this chaos and slip in there to dig it up without the Baroness ever being the wiser. (Possibly true; see L1: *The Secret of Bone Hill* for more details.)

8. If you touch your nose with your thumb while ordering a drink from Falco, he'll give it to you for free. It's all part of a secret dwarven ritual. (False; this is a common joke that the regulars pull on newcomers.)

9. The rats are all escapees from the Baroness' dungeons. She uses them in her foul experiments and to torture her enemies. (False)

10. Don't let this get around, but Captain Starsen is a wizard. (True)

An Offer You Can't Refuse

After their encounter with Sandra and the giant rats, the PCs are likely to seek shelter. There are only two inns in town, Falco's Tavern (area **2**) where the PCs were dropped off in the "Arrival In Restenford" section, and the Tavern of the West Wind (on the northeast shore) across town. If the PCs went off to aid the screaming girl and then return to Falco's Tavern, they find a tavern full of friendly folk eager to hear what happened. If they are open and wise, the PCs can make some friends here, especially if they tell how they killed a pack or two of giant rats. Such news brings cheers from the crowd and a round of beers on Falco.

Falco does everything he can to convince the PCs to stay at his place, especially if they slew "some o' them mangy, long-toothed vermin." The DM should take this opportunity to allow the PCs to meet some of the common people and perhaps hear a rumor or two from them. The people here are all farmers and fishermen, aside from Falco and his assistant Gap. (For more details on these two NPCs and the tavern, see area **2** in the "Town of Restenford" section.) The PCs are free to leave the tavern and explore the town, though if Falco has made them into local heroes, they may have a difficult time tearing themselves away.

No matter what the PCs decide to do, unless it involves going underground and laying low, the following encounter should occur around five or six o'clock, sometime just after they have eaten dinner. Andrella has been informed that the *Whale's Teeth* has just dropped off supplies and passengers. She wishes to have a meeting with these "passengers" immediately, but she is in a foul, irritable mood. She has no stomach for pleasantries or cordiality at the moment and has ordered Captain Starsen to assemble a guard patrol to go and arrest these probable adventurers. In other words, she intends to meet with the adventurers to discuss her proposal, and she won't take no for an answer.

Captain Starsen is a little more level-headed, but he is very loyal and always follows orders. Therefore, he intends to use the encounter to gauge the adventurers—to see what they're made of. But if things get out of hand, he intends to be a little more diplomatic than the Baroness' tone implied.

Unless the PCs are in complete hiding, no matter where they are in the early evening, Captain Starsen and his patrol approach them. If the PCs have split up, then the captain and his men approach the largest group. It is likely that the PCs will be in a tavern finishing dinner, and in this case the captain sends one of his men through a back door to warn a serving wench what is about to happen. She in turn warns the other patrons of the tavern over the next few minutes. If the PCs are not in a tavern for this encounter, then the DM will have to make a few adjustments before running it. Otherwise, the DM should read or paraphrase the following:

> You are enjoying the dregs of your ales when you notice the buzzing of the taproom conversations begin to die down. Looking around, you notice that most of the other patrons have either left or are in the process of leaving. As the last one ducks out the front door, the door is opened wider and in marches a group of half a dozen soldiers clad in leather armor and blue tunics. Leading the group is a man of medium build with long brown hair hanging loosely about his shoulder. As he walks toward your table, you can just discern the slight points of his ears protruding from the locks of his hair.
>
> As the soldiers draw nearer, they fan out in a semi-circle around your table. Each of the men has a firm grip on the hilt of his long sword. The leader looks your group up and down with his blue eyes and then glances at his men. He steps closer, drawing a hand slowly down the stubble on his cheek. Clearing his throat, he speaks, "The Baroness of Restenford wishes to speak with you."

Captain Starsen is a fighting man at heart, and he wants to get a feel for these adventurers before leading them before the Baroness. He deliberately set up this encounter to be mildly threatening, but he does not want any hostilities. If the PCs stand up for themselves or respond to the

situation by reaching for their weapons, he quickly attempts to calm them with a wide grin and open arms. "Ho there! Hold, hold your arms friends. I can tell by the way you bear yourselves that you are just the people we need. Please, come with us, the Baroness only wishes to discuss a job that requires people such as yourselves." The PCs have won both his admiration and respect.

If the PCs will not be calmed and insist on fighting the guards, Captain Starsen leads his men against them with a grin. The other six members of his patrol arrive on the round following the initial hostilities. The captain and his men fight to subdue, and Captain Starsen attempts to talk the PCs down the whole while. If the PCs slay ant of his men, however, the gloves come off. Starsen's grin disappears and he orders his men to "Kill these brigands." If six or more of his men are killed, the captain orders a fighting retreat and attempts to warn the rest of the town guard. If the PCs allow the encounter to progress this far, despite all the warnings, they are in big trouble. No matter where they go in Restenford, they find no friendly faces. Furthermore, they are actively hunted as bandits. In this case, their only hope is to do some really fast talking or flee the town. If they flee, however, a bad reputation hounds them every step they take across Lendore Isle.

If, on the other hand, the PCs react meekly and simply agree to come along, the captain frowns and shakes his head. Then, turning to one

of his men, he says, "Gather up their weapons, corporal, and then escort them outside. I'll be waiting with the others in the street." Captain Starsen is giving the PCs one more chance to win his respect; if they refuse to give up their weapons or show some other intent to resist, then he rushes back to the scene and responds as above. If they still simply comply with his requests, however, then Starsen and another half dozen town guards await them in the street outside. Shaking his head again, he orders his men to break into two groups, one marching before the PCs and the other behind. With one last shrug, he marches the PCs away to Castle Restenford. The captain doubts the worth of these supposed adventurers.

Whether they win Captain Starsen's respect or not, the PCs are escorted by him and his men to Castle Restenford. The DM should give a quick description of the route taken as well as the main features of Castle Restenford (see area **1** in the "Town of Restenford" section). This description should be only superficial, as Captain Starsen wastes no time marching the PCs straight to the castle, through the gate, and directly into the Baroness' throne room.

Once the PCs enter the throne room the DM should read or paraphrase the following:

> Your group is led down a narrow passage and into a rectangular room with a high ceiling. The room's decorations are spartan, consisting of three high-backed thrones situated upon a dais at the other end of the room and a large red carpet at the foot of the dais. The dais has two tiers, and the thrones are divided between them. One throne sits in the center of the upper tier, facing the rest of the room, while the other two thrones sit on the lower tier to either side of the central throne and face slightly toward the center of the chamber.
>
> A young woman with long auburn hair occupies the central throne. She is clad in a long green dress of regal quality. She watches silently, rubbing her knuckles, as you enter. Below this woman, in the left-hand throne, sits a short man dressed in a brown robe, the cowl thrown back to reveal his balding head.
>
> "At last!" the woman slams one fist down on the arm of her throne. "Phaulkon's eyes be blasted, I thought you had stopped to have dinner with them, Captain."
>
> Captain Starsen steps up to the dais and bows his head. "My apologies, milady. My men and I were ... detained. We did, however, manage to bring the mercenaries you asked for." With that, the captain steps aside and waves a sweeping arm in your direction.

The Baroness is a blunt woman of powerful emotions, and she let her hot temper get the best of her when she ordered the captain to arrest the PCs. Fortunately, Father Sedrick has calmed her somewhat. She begins by apologizing for any rough treatment the PCs may have received from her men. She then asks the PCs if they are experienced adventurers and then before they can respond, she says "good." The man to her left interrupts by mumbling something to her and she responds with a tight-lipped frown. After collecting herself for a moment, she asks the PCs if they would be interested in performing a task suited to their skills.

If they are interested, she proceeds to tell the PCs of the events that have occurred in the last week (see the "Adventure Background" section). The adventurers are to find out who or what is responsible for these events and either eliminate or arrest them. Of course, the PCs must present some proof to support their accomplishments. In addition, the PCs are to rid the town of these "annoying rats." The adventurers can begin their investigations on the morrow. Almost as an afterthought, the Baroness tells them that they have one other responsibility. Beginning tonight, the PCs are responsible for the security of the Phaulkon mortuary where the chalice was stolen. To close the deal, the Baroness informs the PCs that their group will be paid 500 gp upon proper resolution of the town's current problems.

The Baroness stands, tells the PCs that Father Sedrick (gesturing to the brown-robed man) can answer any further questions before the guards escort them to the Phaulkon Abbey. She excuses herself and leaves, saying that she and Captain Starsen must tend to other duties.

If the PCs are uninterested in this job, the Baroness looks shocked. She quickly recovers and scowls coldly at them before saying, "You are adventurers. You live for work such as this. If you do not care for my terms, then you may seek work elsewhere." She has again lost her temper and orders the PCs ejected from the castle.

Fortunately, the PCs find Father Sedrick to be a much more helpful individual. If the PCs accept the job, he is happy to answer any questions to the best of his ability. The DM should remember that he is not aware of any of the information found in the "For the Dungeon Master" section. It is important that the PCs not become aware of any of this information too soon. On the way to the abbey, Father Sedrick apologizes for the Baroness' rough treatment. He claims that she means well, but that she is very independent and does not like having to request outside help. If asked why the town guards have not been assigned to protect the abbey's mortuary, Father Sedrick explains that the soldiers are busy patrolling the streets and that the Baroness agreed to hire adventurers to solve the recent mysteries only if she did not have to deal with the outsiders personally.

Captain Villie Starsen (3rd/3rd-level elf fighter/wizard): AL LN; AC 7; MV 12; F3/W3; hp 19; THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 14, C 10, I 14, W 11, Ch 15; ML 15; *leather armor +1*, long sword, long bow, 20 arrows, potion of *heroism*, dagger, gold armband worth 100 gp, pouch containing 25 gp.

Spells: *mending, sleep; bind.*

Although Villie began his adventuring career as a wizard, on his very first adventure his magical powers failed to save his friends from a band of orcs. Only his strong sword arm allowed him to survive. From that day forward, Villie turned his back on fickle magic and put his faith in his reliable sword. As a result, Villie is unable to memorize more than just a few spells.

Unlike most of the town guard and officials, Captain Starsen maintains his quarters away from Castle Restenford. He lives in the newly

constructed watch tower/lighthouse just to the east of town. He keeps his quarters in this tower both because he values his space away from the constant frantic energies of the many humans in the castle and because the tower is a very important strategic location to the town.

For the guardsmen's statistics, see area **1** in the "Town of Restenford" section.

Guarding the Dead

Assuming that the PCs accept the job, they follow Father Sedrick to the Phaulkon grounds. After answering their questions, he leads them to the mortuary and gives them a brief tour of the building (area **4** in the "Town of Restenford" section). He tells them that there are currently two bodies awaiting burial in the building, both victims of the rat packs, and that the PCs should leave them undisturbed. Father Sedrick makes it clear that the mortuary is not an inn and, therefore, the PCs should leave no more than two or three guards in the building at any one time. Once the group has made it clear that they understand the conditions, Sedrick gives them a key that opens the outside doors and leaves them to proceed as they chose.

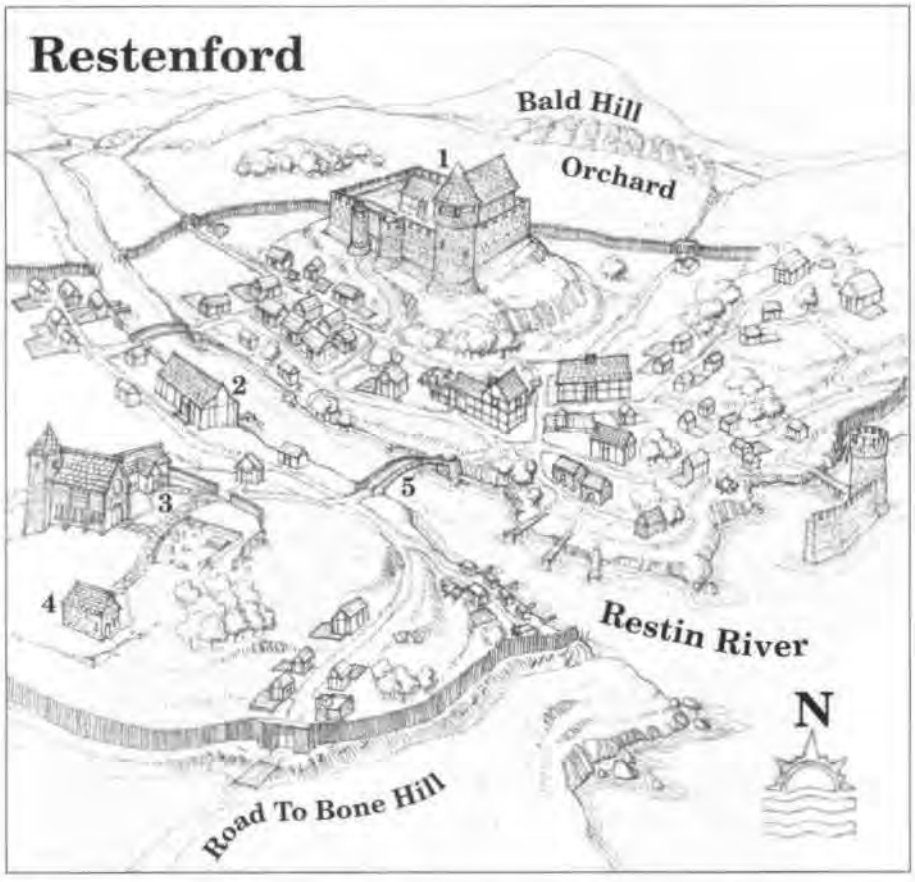
The PCs need only guard the mortuary at night because the priests attend the building in the daytime. This leaves them free during the day to wander about town seeking clues to the recent mysteries and slaying giant rats.

The DM may provide the PCs with a sketch of the mortuary's floorplan (without the secret trapdoor, of course). During the first night's watch, the DM should concentrate on describing the macabre nature of the place and emphasize the eeriness of this duty. The aim here is to spook the PCs a little—to foreshadow the dark deeds to come. (The DM might find it useful to review the RAVENLOFT® campaign's *Domains of Dread* sourcebook for helpful tips on building suspense.) Despite all this, the first night's watch passes without incident.

The second night of their watch is more eventful, but unless the PCs are very perceptive, it should only serve to further their confusion (and horror). About an hour after dark, one or more PCs become aware of a scratching sound coming from the outside door in area **4d**. The sound is relatively soft, but persistent, and continues for up to 1 turn. This noise is caused by a stray cat that often comes to this building because one of the Phaulkon priests who works here late on a regular basis gives the cat goat's milk in a small dish. If the PCs simply open the door, they immediately hear a "meow" followed by purring. If the cat is treated well by the PCs, given some milk or some other treat, she returns each night of the PCs watch around this time. On the other hand, if the PCs simply ignore the cat or scare it away (easily accomplished), they are not troubled by the cat again.

The cat's appearance inadvertently serves as cover for another visitor to the building. While the PCs are away, if area **4c** is left unoccupied, one of the ghasts emerges from the secret trapdoor and partially pulls away the shroud covering the body on the southernmost slab. He takes the opportunity to feast upon the corpse a bit before fleeing back through the trapdoor. Unless the PCs are exceptionally vigilant, the DM should allow the ghast to go undetected. Only later during their rounds should the PCs have a chance to notice the disturbance to the body. Even in this case, the shroud is in a position that makes it appear as if one corner simply slipped off. Also, since these bodies were the victims of giant rat attacks, it is difficult to discern the new bite marks. Again, unless the PCs took exceptional care to note the specific details beforehand, they should not know with any certainty that anything took place. The DM should play up the eeriness of the situation and try to make the PCs feel as if they are not fully cognizant of what is happening around them.

The remnants of an ancient evil terrorize brave adventurers.



Assuming the PCs do not detect anything specific due to the ghast's visit, the rest of the night passes uneventfully. The following day, it takes the mortuary's attending Phaulkon priests only moments to detect the despoiling of the body. They immediately report the matter to Father Sedrick, who in turn tracks down the PCs to question them about the matter. The good father is furious, and he demands the PCs explain this sacrilege. If the PCs are respectful, Father Sedrick can be calmed somewhat. He listens to whatever explanation is given, noting that there are new wounds to one of the bodies in the mortuary and that some of the flesh was chewed away. Then he informs the PCs with disgust that the mortuary is completely under their protection. He goes on to emphasize that if any further sacrilege occurs, he will hold the PCs directly responsible. He then storms off, allowing the PCs to contemplate their ineptitude.

If all goes well, the PCs should be feeling as if they have been had. On the third night, the ghast once again returns to feast upon the corpses in area **4c**. This should occur during a time when there are no PCs in the room. The ghast enters via the trapdoor but becomes overly greedy this visit. Instead of feeding on the corpse for a few moments and then fleeing, he takes the whole body and stuffs it down the trapdoor. He quickly follows, but not before leaving a stain of mud on the floor near the trapdoor. In addition, a small piece of white cloth (a corner from the shroud) has been caught in the edge of the secret trapdoor. This action by the ghast is likely to cause a lot of noise, and the PCs are almost certainly aware of something going on within the room. The PCs either encounter the ghast in the act or the empty room just after he has left, depending upon how rapid their response. The ghast is only in the room for one round after the noise begins.

If the PCs station a guard in the room on a continuous basis, the ghast waits below the trapdoor listening to the breathing of the guard. If the guard has not left by 2:00 A.M., the ghast loses its patience and enters the room anyway. In this case, the ghast immediately attacks the guard (very likely with surprise if the PCs have not found the trapdoor) in an attempt to paralyze him and drag him down the trapdoor. This strike is a quick sneak attack by the ghast, and if it should fail for any reason, the ghast immediately withdraws to the safety of the catacombs below. The ghast does not fight a battle here unless somehow forced to do so. The same is true if the ghast is encountered attempting to steal the body. The DM is free to choose any of the three ghasts for this encounter.

Regardless of the outcome of this encounter, the PCs become aware of the caverns below the mortuary and their likely connection to the town's mysterious plight. If the PCs decide to go to either Father Sedrick or the Baroness concerning this news, they both agree that the PCs should investigate below.

Town of Restenford

Restenford is normally a bustling town, with ships, merchants and others constantly coming and going. Unfortunately, times are not normal. The Restenford that the PCs find upon their arrival is a town under siege. The streets are generally deserted and anyone who is encountered on them is usually running and unwilling to stop. All town officials are in a foul mood, due to their having to work extremely long shifts with no signs of it doing any good.

Behind the safety of closed doors, however, the people seem different. They are friendly and easy-going, with a huge appetite for stories and gossip. Many of the people in town have seen just enough of the recent events to have a strange tale or two to tell. Those who have seen nothing are often willing to make something up anyway. As long as they are safe and are treated kindly, the people of Restenford are more than willing to talk about almost anything.

Unless otherwise noted in the text, all of Restenford's residents are 0-level humans with the following statistics: AL varies; AC 10; MV 12; hp 1d6; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 8. Virtually all adult males in the town belong to the

militia, but they are only mustered if a threat of invasion occurs. Because the militia's arms are stored in Castle Restenford, few common people are armed with more than a knife. If forced into combat, these people fight with any number of improvised weapons, from scythes to pitchforks.

The descriptions below cover the most important locations in the town. The DM is encouraged to flesh out the rest of the town as desired.

If the DM has access to the module L1: *The Secret of Bone Hill*, he will find the Restenford Town section therein to be a valuable aid. Note, however, that adjustments are still required to allow for the five-year passage of time and other events.

1. Castle Restenford.

Atop a low hill on the northern side of town broods Castle Restenford. The small keep is little more than a stone walled compound with one large corner tower, capped with a low mushroom-like roof. The wooden tops of several other buildings can be seen peeking over the battlements. The dark silhouettes of pacing guards patrol the ramparts, each stopping occasionally to peer out over the town.

The outer walls of the castle show the dark stains of soot—remnants of a concentrated pirate raid two years earlier. Ever since the attack, the Baroness has taken great pains to maintain the ever vigilant castle patrols. Appearances are deceiving, however. In reality, the castle houses only sixteen men-at-arms, and many of these are away patrolling the town or maintaining a post at any given time, especially during the recent crisis. Often the walls are only patrolled by two or three guards, who in turn can call upon few reinforcements. The Baroness does her best to augment the castle's apparent defenses with several minor illusions, but all in all, the castle is far less defended than it appears. Indeed, the castle's most defensible building, the 50'-tall corner tower, is not even accessible to the castle residents. This is due to a long-standing lease arrangement that gives the sorcerer Pelltar all rights to the tower. He uses the tower as a private sanctuary and allows no one inside save himself. (Pelltar is away for the duration of this adventure, and his tower is enspelled to prevent unwanted intrusion. The DM can devise any number of magical traps to discourage thieves from entering the wizard's tower.)

Other than the town guards and the Baroness, the castle houses three men, seven women and thirteen children. These people are all servants or the families of the guardsmen. Only during a full-scale invasion do any of these people take up arms.

The castle houses fifteen ordinary guardsmen and Sergeant Brilman. Sergeant Brilman is in overall command of the castle's defenses and is only answerable to Captain Starsen and the Baroness herself. As the Baroness of Restenford, Andrella Restenford lives modestly within the castle's keep with no family or husband. She is a mage of middling powers and only dabbles in magic rather than concentrating her efforts in it. In recent years she works only to improve the way of life in Restenford and has little time for anything else.

Guardsmen (15 1st-level human fighters): INT average; AL N, LN, or NG; AC 7; MV 12; F1; hp 6 each; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; long sword, spear, studded leather armor.

Brilman, sergeant of the guard (4th-level human fighter): AL NG; AC 4; MV 12; F4; hp 32; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 11, C 14, I 12, W 14, Ch 14; *chain mail +1*, broad sword, dagger, light crossbow, 15 bolts, gold ring worth 150 gp, pouch containing 32 sp and 12 cp.

Brilman is a gruff, no-nonsense soldier who takes his duties to the town and the Baroness very seriously.

Andrella Restenford, Baroness of Restenford (5th-level human wizard): AL LN (with good tendencies); AC 7; MV 12; W5; hp 15; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; dagger, *ring of protection +2*, *wand of magic missiles* (5 charges), fine green dress, 35 gp and 16 sp.

Spells: *audible glamer, phantasmal force, shield, shocking grasp; mirror image, wizard lock; slow*.

2. Falco's Tavern. The PCs first arrive at Falco's tavern by boat (see "Arrival in Restenford"). Below is a description of the tavern:

Dominating the western shore of the river, between the two bridges, is a single story tavern. The tavern has a set of double doors that face onto the road as well as a series of docks facing the river, thus making it accessible to both pedestrians and river traffic. The signs that hang over every door continue this simple theme, reading "Falco's Tavern."

Falco usually has four rooms for rent, but one is currently occupied. He charges 11 sp a night to rent any of the remaining three rooms. Falco's Tavern serves a lunch of bread and stew, beer, ale, and an assortment of hard liquors. If pressed, he can produce a few bottles of wine, but the quality is poor. Falco's prices are equivalent to those found in the *Player's Handbook*, page 90. The featured drink at Falco's is Fire Eyes ale (2 sp per tankard), and most patrons heartily endorse this ale if asked.

Besides drinking and gossip, the other popular pasttime featured at Falco's Tavern is darts, and Falco has four dartboards arranged around the common room. Dart games are often the subject of wagers around the tavern, but Falco himself only bets when Gap plays. Gap is the local champion, being an expert at darts.

Falco (1st-level dwarven fighter): AL CN; AC 4; MV 12; F1; hp 8; THACO 19 (with magical sword); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14; D 16; C 15; I 14; W 13; Ch 12; ML 13; leather armor, *ring of protection +2*, *short sword +1*, 11 gp and 27 sp.

Gap (0-level dwarven militiaman): AL CN; AC 6; MV 6; 0-level; hp 4; THACO 20; #AT 1 or 3; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 17, C 12, I 11, W 11, Ch 13; ML 10; leather apron (AC 9), dagger, four darts, 34 sp.

3. Phaulkon Abbey.

The southwest part of town is dominated by a large, low hill covered in a thin layer of green grass. At the summit of this hill, pushed up to the edge of a stand of gnarled oak trees, lies the ancient grounds of an abbey. Were it not for the well maintained road and the garden between the rectory and the abbey itself, the worn stone buildings

would seem deserted. As it is, a hush seems to hang over the hilltop, almost as if the hill itself were vowed to silence.

These buildings are among the oldest in Restenford. Once they were splendid edifices that boldly held civilization against the savage wilds of the isle. Now, however, the abbey shows heavy signs of age and neglect. Roughly 25% of Restenford's population worships Phaulkon, and the priests have traditionally been supported by the Restenford noble family. Due to Andrella Restenford's bitter feelings toward this abbey and its priests, this support has been withdrawn, though not officially. Still, the local populace is generally aware that their ruler no longer supports the Phaulkon Abbey, and many no longer attend services because of it.

The abbey is the home of eight priests. In former days, many of the priests were of middling power, but due to the losses in the pirate raid and the overall decline of the abbey, all of the remaining priests are of lesser status. The abbot himself is a young man by priestly standards, only in his early thirties. Five years earlier, Father Sedrick was a naive acolyte. Now he is the head of his order. The only member of the abbey who is older than Father Sedrick is Brother Selmo. Selmo, however, is a very unorthodox priest. He tends to look beyond traditions and proper etiquette in favor of the greater good. Though his intentions are always benevolent, his methods too often get him into trouble. The Phaulkon priests realized years ago that Selmo would never do as the head of the waning priesthood and so chose to allow him to serve Phaulkon in a different manner. For more information on Brother Selmo and the Phaulkon Abbey's involvement in the current troubles, see the "For the Dungeon Master" section.

Father Sedrick (3rd-level human priest): AL NG; AC 5; MV 9; C3; hp 15; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 11, D 12, C 13, I 15, W 15, Ch 14; ML 10; long robes, chain mail, mace, potion of *healing*, clerical scroll (*cure light wounds* (×2) and *cure blindness*), 13 sp and 11 gp.

Spells: *bless, cure light wounds, detect magic, protection from evil; messenger, withdraw.*

Acolytes (6 1st-level human priests): AL NG; AC 7; MV 12; C1; hp 8, 6, 6, 5, 3, 2; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; studded leather armor, mace, 2–20 sp. The DM should choose which first-level spell each of these priests has memorized as the situation requires.

Brother Selmo's statistics can be found in area **7** of the "Pirate Caverns" section.

4. The Phaulkon Morgue.

Past the aging abbey buildings and down the slope of the far side of the hill, a dusty path leads to a long box-like building. Its plain grey stone walls and tightly shuddered windows almost blend with the featureless hillside. The only feature the building has that makes it stand out are the monstrous gargoyles that leer down from its roof edges.

The town mortuary is the property of the Phaulkon Abbey. Once a shrine built to house a sacred chalice, the building was enlarged and converted to serve as a mortuary once the priests began to bury the people's dead in the cemetery outside the town's walls. Death is a very somber affair, with only the deceased's family and very close friends attending the funeral in a small chapel in this building. The body is purified by the priests in the name of Phaulkon before burial in a two-day ceremony. This ceremony is followed by a brief wake conducted by the abbot and a select few priests of the order.

4a. Reception Hall. This sparse room is decorated in drab colors, with yellow draperies about the windows and a large brown rug spread across the center of the floor. The room's few furnishings include three stools and a rickety table for refreshments.

4b. Chapel. This large room is very regally decorated. The walls are lined with floor-to-ceiling tapestries of deep blue, except for the east wall which is

dominated by a pair of 3' × 5' stained glass windows. The window to the left depicts a yellow sun high above rolling blue waves. The window on the right depicts a white moon sinking into purple-blue waves.

The room itself is crowded with wooden pews that are lined up below a large stone altar. The altar is draped with a green cloth, and small brass incense burners sit in each corner. Behind the altar, in the northeast corner of the room, is a pulpit of dark-stained oak.

4c. Preparation Room. This dark room seems low and cramped. The bare stone floor is rough and discolored in spots. Two long and narrow wooden tables occupy the center of the room, each the resting place of a body, the first a young woman and the second an old man. Each is covered with a white sheet. In the western corner is a tall wooden cabinet containing all the materials used to prepare the dead as well as cleaning tools and supplies for the chapel.

The last furnishing here is a simple wooden pedestal in the north corner. The pedestal is covered in a thin coat of light blue paint that is peeling away in patches. The pedestal holds nothing, though from the distinct circular marking in the center of the pedestal's top, something once sat here.

Until recently, a holy chalice of forgotten importance to the Phaulkon order rested here. Unknown to almost everyone in town, a secret trapdoor is located in the floor right before this pedestal. It is extremely well hidden (elves and half-elves cannot locate it by simply walking by—a thorough search must be made) and difficult to open from this side, requiring an Open Doors roll. This trapdoor leads directly into the pirate catacombs below Restenford (see "The Pirate Catacombs" section).

4d. Back Hall. This plain hallway shows signs of heavy use. The walls, floors and doors to this area all display nicks or other marks. The small window here is very narrow (2' × 4') and one of its shutters is broken, unable to be latched. The priests primarily enter the building through the door here, especially when carrying bodies in or out.

The Ghasts

These three ghasts are all that remain of the ancient pirate crew who once dwelt on this site. When the crew fell upon each other after burying their chieftain, many arose after their deaths to prey on the surrounding lands. When the priests of Phaulkon entered the catacombs to wage war upon these undead, many on both sides were destroyed.

Like most of their kind, these ghasts are hunched over monstrosities that vaguely resemble their former human selves. Their faces are twisted, their lower jaws protruding much like a dog's, black fangs dripping over their forked tongues. They wear only a few shredded, dirt-caked rags; the 24-hp ghast also wears a necklace of shark's teeth. When they move, they hobble along in a wildly flailing gait. They have narrow slitted eyes that glow green in the presence of a fiery light source. They appear as ghouls, but when encountered at close range the foul stench they exude quickly reveals their true nature.

Unlike much of their kind, these ghasts have slightly different personalities. The most powerful ghast (31 hp) was once a ship's mate named Randel and still pines for the personal treasures he hid away long ago. He is nominally the leader of the group and often cuffs the others when talking or hissing at them. (Their communicative powers are extremely limited.)

The next ghast (24 hp), Natonga, was once a native of Hepmonaland like the former chieftain of the pirates. Of the ghasts, his appearance stands out the most. His hard, calloused skin is very dark, almost black, and the remains of several large white tattoos can be seen on his torso. In addition, a loose necklace of browning shark teeth hangs from his neck. This necklace has been treated with a *permanent protection from good* spell; good-aligned opponents strike him with a –2 to hit, and Natonga receives a +2 saving throw bonus against spells cast by good opponents.

The last ghast (14 hp) was once a small, pitiful man who managed to stay alive among the other pirates because he sniveled and served them. Despite being a pathetic coward, Dorin was also a talented thief, and he preyed upon his fellows even more successfully than they preyed upon merchant vessels. As a ghast, Dorin still gets pushed around by his fellows but manages to pilfer a choice bit of food while the others are distracted. Because of his cowardly instincts when alive, Dorin still tends to hover back in the shadows, letting the others go first while looking for opportunities to present themselves.

Despite their personality traits, these former pirates are still ghasts. As such, their driving motivation is to feast upon the bodies of the dead. While they eat anything that is dead, they prefer to feed upon human or demihuman corpses. They are not above killing live prey, but they prefer the taste of dead flesh and certainly choose this option if it is available and less risky. They are very old for ghasts, and this, coupled with their history, makes these ghasts very cunning. While fearless, they prefer caution. If at all possible, they only commit to melee while within the confines of their underground lair, where they instinctively feel safe and have the advantage. Each night, however, they cautiously emerge into the streets via the rat tunnels (see area **12** of "The Pirate Catacombs" section) in search of corpses or an unwary individual; they never venture forth in the daytime. These prowlings are responsible for the sightings of shadows stalking the streets. If confronted with force from more than one individual while above ground, they flee unless somehow trapped.

Ghasts (3): INT very; AL CE; AC 4; MV 15; HD 4; hp 31, 24, 14; THACO 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1–4/1–4/1–8; SA paralyzation (lasts 1d6+4 rounds); see also "The Pirate Catacombs" section; SD immune to *sleep* and *charm* spells; all attempts to turn are at –2 due to their old age (powerful individual wills); carrion stench (10' range; opponents affected by the stench are –2 to hit); SZ M; ML 14; *MM*/131.

5. The South Bridge. This bridge is important to the adventure because it serves as the home of the street urchin Sandra, though almost no one in town is aware of this. In addition to her two stray dogs, Sandra has another dog named Freedom (6 hp). Together with her three dogs, Sandra can be found sleeping here every night.

Though she has nothing of value, she has hidden the Holy Chalice of Phaulkon here in her nest beneath the bridge. Due to the magical aura given off by this object, Sandra and her dogs have been unmolested by the ghasts at night. If confronted in her lair, Sandra attempts to flee while her dogs attack ferociously to protect their mistress (+1 to all to hit and damage rolls). If Sandra is captured and questioned by the PCs, she quickly confesses all she knows and begs for mercy. Consult the "Arrival in Restenford" section for Sandra and her dogs' statistics.

The Pirate Catacombs

The pirate catacombs beneath Restenford consist of several large, low caverns connected by tunnels dug between them. The tunnels are fairly primitive in nature but are shored up by large oak timbers at irregular intervals. These beams are composed mostly of timber taken from wrecked ships, and several pieces are obvious as such. Unfortunately, these beams are uniformly rotten in nature and provide almost no support.

Due to the close proximity of these catacombs to both the ocean and the Restin river (a small underground steam even branches from the river to run through these caves and into deeper regions), the entire complex is very damp, even dripping wet in places. The reek of wet earth and heavy infestations of mold permeate the air. All these factors combine to make these catacombs a highly unstable place. The air is rank, the footing is slippery, and even the slightest pressure placed against a wall or ceiling might cause some form of cave-in (the severity of which is left up to the DM, depending on his whims and the circumstances). It should also be noted that no area of these catacombs is lit by any form of light source.

1. Doorway to Darkness.

> The dark opening in the stone floor before you wafts forth a foul odor of soggy earth and mold. The stench brings with it a thick wetness that hangs in the air, pressing against your skin. The first few rungs of a rusting ladder can be seen disappearing below.

Though the ladder may appear unsound, its thick iron rungs will support the PCs with only mild protests. The ladder drops 15' before coming to rest in a small chamber, obviously dug from the rough earth long ago. The walls are supported with moldy, wooden beams. To the north a rough archway leads to a larger chamber beyond, while a tunnel leads away to the east. Any light source stronger than a candle causes tiny specks to sparkle in the earth surrounding the archway. This is caused by the silver dust coating its entire frame, despite most of it being covered by grime or having been worn away.

2. The Holding Cell.

> This chamber, though still rough, is much better constructed than the smaller entry cave. The walls glisten with a sheen much more intense than mere wetness, and your lights seem to rebound and amplify this intenseness until it almost appears that the walls are dripping molten silver.

Like the archway, the walls, floor and ceiling of this chamber have been coated with a thin layer of silver dust. In addition, these surfaces were also rubbed with powdered iron, though the years have made this all but invisible. The floor before the archway has also been treated in this way. These materials were placed here in order to amplify the effects of the holy chalice's aura of *protection from evil*. When the ancient priests of Phaulkon originally lured the ghasts into this room over 100 years ago, the silver and iron sprinklings held the undead at bay until the holy chalice was set upon its pedestal, its aura sealing the archway against evil. (The chalice's aura radiates out to 20 feet, encompassing area **1**.) The silver dust and powdered iron amplified the protection aura's effects, trapping the undead in a bubble they were unable to escape.

Other than the silver dust and powdered iron, this room contains animal bones that have been gnawed into unrecognizable lumps.

3. Crossroads.

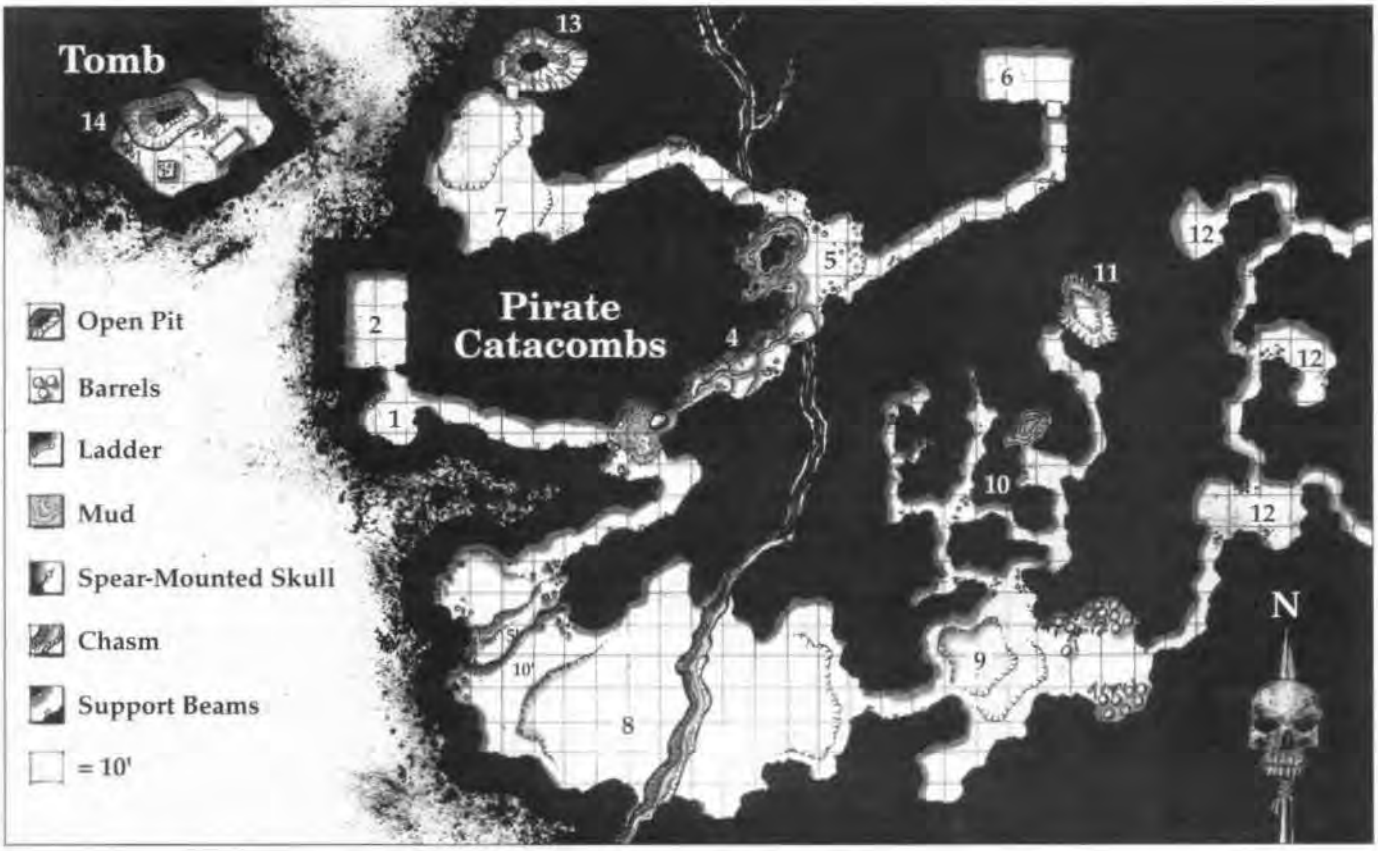
> The narrow tunnel opens into a room that seems to be little more than a deviation point. A huge boulder rises floor to ceiling in the northeastern part of the room, and a steady stream of water droplets runs down its sides, turning the floor into a molasses of mud.

This juncture was originally just a passageway, but when the pirates encountered the huge boulder in their path, they hollowed out the area surrounding it to form this crossroads. Although it is not obvious from either of the main passageways, there is a small opening behind the boulder that leads to a narrow gallery that slopes gently downward to the northeast. Because of its lower nature, most of the water that drips down the boulder drains away through this opening. The remaining water creates a large pool of thick mud that serves as the room's floor. Movement through this area is one-third normal, and any attempt to move more rapidly requires a Dexterity check with a –2 modifier to remain standing. Any thorough examination of the floor turns up a single recent boot print near the boulder (Brother Selmo passing through).

4. Sloping Gallery.

> A small fissure gives entrance to a narrow gallery with a high ceiling that slopes downward and to the northeast. The ceiling is clustered tightly with stalactites that occasionally merge with stalagmites to form thin pillars. The hard stone floor glistens with wetness, and a shallow stream of water rolls down the gallery from the boulder.

This narrow cavern is every bit as treacherous to navigate as it appears. The slope is fairly steep and dripping wet. In addition, the cavern's floor



has been worn very smooth by the passage of water over so many years. Anyone not using climbing gear to descend here must make three consecutive Dexterity checks (at a –3 penalty if wearing normal boots, or –1 penalty if barefoot) or tumble down the slope and suffer 2d8 hp damage (half if the first Dexterity check is made, one-quarter if the first two are successful). Due to the slipperiness, all climbing checks are made at –10%, with failure bringing the same results as above. Those who use climbing gear, such as iron spikes and ropes, have little difficulty descending here. This method takes much longer, and the noise made certainly attracts any of the surviving ghasts within 3–12 rounds.

When the ghasts arrive, they use this terrain to their advantage by pouncing on characters who are struggling to climb back up. Due to their sharp claws and familiarity with this area, the ghasts need only make two Dexterity checks with no penalty. (Assume the ghasts have 12 Dexterity.)

5. The Pool.

The gallery ends at a cavern with a domed ceiling. The dome is cramped with hanging stalactites. Near the western wall, several large stalactites and stalagmites have grown together, side by side, forming one colossal pillar that seems more like some giant underground flower than a structure of stone. At the foot of this wondrous pillar a large clear pool has formed where the water from the gallery has collected.

Though the pillar is a spectacular piece of natural architecture, it has no other special properties other than to help support the 20' ceiling. The floor here is fairly smooth, but much more even than the gallery and can be safely traversed without penalty.

Those peering into the pool with some sort of light detect the glint of metal in the shallow water. Near the center of the 7' wide pool, resting under 2½ feet of water, is a strange, roughly man-sized rock outcropping that is dark and lumpy. This stands in sharp contrast to the rest of the pool's bottom, which consists of smooth, grayish stone. The glint of metal comes from one edge of this outcropping. In fact, the outcropping is the calcified remains of an ancient pirate and his completely rusted shield and cutlass. The glint of metal comes from a gold armband (worth 80 gp) around what was once his left forearm. Unfortunately, the pirate's bones have become embedded in the stone of the pool's bottom. Even worse, the floor of the pool is thin and very unstable as the underground river that flows into area **8** runs right below it.

Prodding from the shore of the pool with a pole or similar object does not dislodge the armband but creates an ominous eruption of tiny bubbles from the outcropping. Anyone entering the pool and physically attempting to remove the armband from its resting place can do so with a successful Strength check. However, even if the attempt is unsuccessful, the entire bottom of the pool (not the huge pillar) caves in, dropping the offender, as well as anyone else in the

pool at the time, into the rushing river below. Anyone dumped into the river (unless secured by ropes) is swept into area **8** in 1–3 rounds, even if weighed down by armor. The DM might consult the *Player's Handbook* for the rules on "Holding Your Breath." However, an even more dramatic effect would be to allow the character to survive and be washed up upon some rocks in the chasm of area **8**, unconscious and with perhaps a few points of damage. If and when the rest of the party reaches this area, the DM can allow them to discover the missing character(s). Of course, until the PCs are reunited, they should be kept in the dark as to the fate of their companion(s).

6. Destroyed Barracks.

> Pushing the sagging, black-stained door aside reveals a large room with rough, soot-darkened walls. Unlike most of the previous caves you have encountered, this room is relatively dry. The faint smell of soot hangs in the air, and you can see dust motes spinning through the room from the door's disturbance.
>
> The room is strewn with large piles of charred wooden boards, probably once furnishings of some sort. The dull yellow of cracked bones can be seen protruding from some of the piles.

Little of interest can be found here, except the remains of several pirates who died in the fire and two half-melted cutlasses.

7. A Troubled Soul.

> This cavern lies shrouded in shadows due to its large size. The ceiling rises away into blackness, with the dark silhouettes of stalactites pressing into view, giving the impression of some fanged beast lowering its jaws upon you. Strangely, the uneven floor is devoid of stalagmites, giving you an unobstructed view to the far away walls, though they are only faintly discernible.

This large natural cavern is very damp like most of the complex. The floor shows signs of work, mostly the removal of whatever stalagmites once stood here. Small pools of standing water have collected in several of the depressions left by some of the larger stalagmites.

A large door of dark oak is set into the north wall. The door is bound in thick fittings of dull brass, with a large iron circle serving as a pull ring. The door is both unlocked and untrapped, but due to its extreme weight it requires a combined Strength of 22 to open. The upper half of the door is covered with ominous-looking primitive stick figures. A jawless skull motif is prevalent throughout these runes. This primitive writing is a simple warning and serves no other purpose. Any character who has the ancient languages proficiency can make a check at –4 to recognize the symbols as primitive hieroglyphs practiced by the natives of Hepmonaland. Even then, however, the warnings of death and the name Shemnoata are the only things that can be understood.

Brother Selmo crouches in a small alcove in the southern wall. He remains hidden from the PCs until forced into a confrontation or until he observes some obvious clue that the party is non-hostile. If confronted, he shakes his quarterstaff menacingly and warns the adventurers, "Stay back, you fiends, or I'll crack your skulls." Assuming the PCs do not attack him, his bluster quickly fades. He then asks assistance of anyone who seems friendly, and he is very happy if the characters claim they were looking for him.

Brother Selmo has been down here since the night before the PCs arrived in town and is wounded, wet, and very weary. It was apparent to him after only a brief time in these catacombs that he had made a mistake. Though he did not have any clear idea what these catacombs were, they certainly were not the ancient burial crypts of his order. His curiosity seized control of him and he decided to explore a bit before returning to his quarters in the abbey. He encountered several fleeing giant rats in area **3**, though he only saw them as green, gleaming eyes in the shadows. On seeing these eyes, a fear gripped him and he stumbled behind the boulder, tumbling down the gallery (area **4**). He was fortunate to rise from the fall with only a gash across his forehead and a cracked lantern. Unable to return up the slope, he eventually wandered into here where he has camped ever since.

If questioned as to how and why he ended up here, Brother Selmo gives an all too brief account of how he found the secret trapdoor while cleaning up a spill and his curiosity getting the best of him. If pressed for more information or confronted with a compelling question, such as why he is so "geared-up" when he supposedly just serendipitously discovered the secret trapdoor, Selmo claims to be very tired and asks to be returned to the abbey immediately. He shrugs off all further questions and repeats his request, saying only that the other priests must surely be wondering about his whereabouts.

Selmo bears the PCs no ill will, but he believes the abbey's woes to be none of their affair. He is especially disturbed by any mention of the town's problems since his disappearance, as he is beginning to suspect that his own actions might be responsible, at least in part. If the PCs are pushy in their questioning, Brother Selmo begins to feel quite guilty concerning his recent actions and becomes very moody, lapsing into a sullen silence for the rest of the time he remains in the party's company. He only breaks this silence to voice his objections if the adventurers do not immediately take him back to the abbey.

Brother Selmo (2nd-level human priest): AL CG; AC 5; MV 9; C2; hp 6 (10 at full); THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 11, C 12, I 13, W 12, Ch 10; ML 7; cracked lantern, chain mail, quarterstaff, mace, backpack, 10 candles, tinder box, one day's worth of iron rations, 25' rope.

Brother Selmo has no spells at the moment.

8. The Rubble Rift.

> The narrow tunnel gives way to a vast cavern with a relatively low ceiling. Natural stone tiers descend into the cavern, the bulk of which stretches away into the shadows on your left. Despite the cavern's large size, the place is cramped because of the excessive number of mounds of raw earth that choke the floor.

These mounds are so large and undulating that they almost appear as sands on an ocean shore. From somewhere beyond your light, the faint sound of running water can be distinctly heard.

The lower floor of this cavern is a maze of dirt dunes, narrow holes, fissures, and rubble piles. Crossing the cavern's floor is treacherous, forcing characters to travel at one-third movement. The unwary will find that any quick movements are likely to cause a fall. (Anyone attempting to run, engage in melee, or perform any other quick or strenuous movement must make a Dexterity check or fall prone onto a dirt mound.)

Besides this hazardous feature of the cavern, a narrow chasm also cuts the cavern roughly down its middle (running north to south). This chasm is only about ten feet deep and contains an underground stream that flows beneath these catacombs from the direction of area **5**. It is possible that the PCs might locate one or more of their companions washed up on some of the larger rocks in the stream. (See area **5** for more details.) The chasm is narrow, being only four to six feet wide, though anyone trying to jump it may have a difficult time due to the dirt that is collected on its rim. Those attempting to leap the chasm must make a Dexterity check with a –1 penalty to successfully reach the other side. Those who fail this check must make another Dexterity check, again with a –1 penalty in order to catch the lip of the other side, suffering 1–2 hp damage and requiring another round to pull themselves up if they are successful. If this check is also failed, then the character falls into the chasm and suffers 1–6 hp damage.

This cavern is also the playground of the cowardly ghast, Dorin. Unlike the PCs, Dorin suffers no penalty moving across the cavern's floor because of his familiarity with it and the fact that he moves on all fours, using his claws for gripping. Dorin first attacks by lurking back in the shadows, on the eastern side of the chasm, and hurling mud-encrusted skulls at the party (Dmg 1–4). He throws a skull and then retreats, and any character trying to get a look at their attacker is likely only to catch a glimpse of a vaguely humanoid creature with green eyes scuttle behind a mound. He commits to melee only as the first PC crosses the chasm, springing upon his victim from behind a dirt mound while the other PCs are still on the western side of the chasm. If this attack succeeds in paralyzing its victim, Dorin attempts to drag his hapless prey into the cover of the mounds where he can feed without interference. Once he has committed himself to an attack in this way, he does not retreat unless turned by a priest, in which case he flees to area **10** to fight along side Randel.

9. Storage Caverns.

This large irregular cavern has a high, dark ceiling supported by numerous wooden beams. Most of these beams look very weak and some have even fallen or broken. A faint vinegar odor seems to seep from several cylindrical shadows against the far wall. As you watch, several dirt clods roll down from the ceiling above your heads, skipping down the walls near the cavern's entrance.

This small disturbance is a precursor to an attack by the ghast Natonga. If the PCs take heed of this sign and prepare themselves for trouble, they are not be surprised, though it is likely that Natonga still attacks them first. If the PCs ignore this warning, treating it like a minor cave-in, then a surprise roll should be made as normal.

Natonga the ghast lurks above the western entrance upon a small ledge. Upon seeing and hearing the characters approach, he prepares a small cask of water, hence causing the disturbance that the PCs witness as they enter the cavern. On the round following their entrance into the cavern, preferably while they are still close to his hiding place, Natonga attempts to pour his cask of water upon the light source used by the lead character or the first one to appear. Natonga need only roll to hit AC 10 to douse the light. Torches are automatically extinguished, while lanterns have a 50% chance of being doused. It should be noted that Natonga knows that fire can be extinguished, but he cannot discern between it and magical light. Therefore, he attempts to douse even light or *continual light* spells.

Following his attack with the water, Natonga leaps down upon the characters, even if the water attack failed. Unlike the PCs, since Natonga is undead, he suffers no penalties when fighting in total darkness. Furthermore, since his body radiates no heat, infravision will not aid demihuman PCs either. This situation can be highly dangerous because the PCs are fighting totally blind against a single unknown creature in their midst. Characters who strike blindly are likely to swing at an ally rather than their enemy. Whether Natonga gains an advantage or not, the bloodlust is upon him, and he fights until destroyed or until all his opponents are slain and/or paralyzed. If turned, he flees to area **10** to take a stand with Randel.

Once combat is over, the PCs may search the cavern. The cylindrical shadows are the remains of over a hundred barrels, most of which are broken and lie in heaps of rotting wood. The few barrels that remain intact contain foul wines that have become sour smelling vinegar. Tucked behind one of the barrels along the north wall is a decaying leather pouch containing 15 sp, 18 gp and a pair of shark bone dice with gold pips worth 150 gp. Those searching Natonga's ledge, assuming they find some way to climb up to it, find an assortment of gnawed bones (mostly human), an empty wooden cask, a shield encrusted with amethysts (worth 75 gp), and the half eaten remains of a giant rat.

10. Randel's Warren. This area consists of a small maze-like network of tunnels ranging from three to four feet in height and three to five feet wide. Unlike the rest of the tunnels in the catacombs, these narrow tunnels contain no support beams. These tunnels are very rough and may only be traversed by one PC at a time. Only those shorter in stature than dwarves may move through without crawling or hunching over. Weapons longer than a short sword are at –2 to hit, –4 if longer than a long sword.

Randel awaits the PCs in the darkness of his warrens, watching

them from the northern tunnel. If they are foolish enough to enter, he retreats before them, only to launch an attack at the first suitable cross tunnel (keeping in mind that any of the ghasts that may have survived the earlier encounters will be attacking with him). His (their) attack plan is simple. Attack an opponent until it either dies or becomes paralyzed, then drag it away to a quiet corner of the tunnels and devour it. These warrens are the ghasts' last line of retreat, and they cannot be turned while here. Any successful turning attempt does, however, cause them to lose focus and strength (–2 penalties to all attack and savings rolls).

In addition to any of the ghasts that may have been turned in previous encounters, Randel has two ghouls (former sailors) with him that he has created in the past few days. Unlike the ghasts, these monsters are virtually mindless minions that do whatever Randel desires.

Ghouls (2): INT low; AL CE; AC 6; MV 9; HD 2; hp 8, 13; THACO 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1–3/1–3/1–6; SA paralyzation; SD immune to *sleep* and *charm* spells; SZ M; ML 12; *MM*/131.

11. Randel's Treasure Pit.

> The small tunnel winds a long distance, constricting to an even tighter fit. The tunnel then turns sharply to the right and opens into a small cavern with a ceiling of perhaps five feet. Unfortunately, the floor drops away into a steep sided pit, whose bottom is lost in the darkness below.

The floor to the pit is actually 15' down. Anyone who searches the pit's edge finds the frayed end of an ancient rope attached to a rusting iron spike. The spike is now very brittle and snaps if any weight is applied to it. The walls to the pit are uneven, with many footholds, allowing any thief an easy descent.

The floor of the pit is covered with loose dirt and mud. A wooden chest partially obscured by the dirt also lies here. The chest's lock is completely rusted shut and cannot be opened through any means save force. (It can withstand up to 15 hp damage, and all weapons except blunt ones inflict half damage.) The chest contains: 200 sp (some of which are tarnished), 55 gp, a tiny wooden jewelry box studded with corral (worth 25 gp) that holds 12 agates (worth 10 gp each) and a small pearl (worth 100 gp), and a *cutlass +1* in a worn leather sheath decorated with three silver skulls.

12. Giant Rat Warrens.

> This chamber has a low ceiling and is obviously the warren of some burrowing creature. The walls and ceiling are rough with distinct claw impressions. Small circular tunnels exit the warren. A large amount of debris is strewn across the floor. Amid the various bones, rocks, and rotting straw, dark stains of some sticky substance cover the floor.

All these small warrens are basically the same—simple dirt rooms with 3½'–4' ceilings, connected by roughly circular tunnels of the same height. Like the rest of the catacombs, the air here is very moist and a wet film covers everything.

Until just recently, these warrens were the lairs of giant rats. The ghasts drove the rats out by force, killing several before the rest fled to the town's streets. Some fled through the exit tunnels to the east that emerge into the countryside, but most (30–40 giant rats) chose the closer exits in their fear. These exits emerge inside the town walls and into two separate locations amid some of the larger copses of trees (the DM is free to decide exactly where). The ghasts use these exits to move between the catacombs and the town each night.

The dark stains on the floor are all that remain of those rats that were caught by the ghasts. Nothing of value can be found here.

13. Shemnoata's Death Pit.

> Beyond the door lies a roughly circular cavern. The cavern has no floor, but rather drops away into a dark abyss from which rises the soft sound of churning water. Jutting from the walls of the shaft are seven evenly-spaced spears, with their hafts pointing toward the ceiling at a 45° angle. Mounted at the ends of these spears are jawless human skulls, all turned to face the door. A gentle breeze from the door's opening causes two links of thick chain that are suspended from the center of the ceiling to jingle in sharp clinks.

Any movement by the PCs that breaks the plane of the doorframe into this cavern causes a *magic mouth* spell to be activated. The skull mounted directly across from the door booms in a deep voice "Begone! Let the dead rest, lest they rise again ..." This brief warning is only spoken once, and then the skulls display no further signs of magic. The skulls are human—former pirates from Hepmonaland who served Shemnoata faithfully. The spears that support the skulls are all normal spears, though due to their extreme age they are 15% likely to break upon each successful blow struck with them. The spears can be removed from the walls by merely pulling them free (requiring a successful Strength check), assuming the character wishing to do so can get at them.

The shaft drops 110 feet to a series of submerged sea caverns. However, 60 feet down lies a cavern (area **14**), through which the shaft passes, that is not submerged. The rim of the pit, at the level of the door to area **7**, has several iron rungs mounted into the stone. Close examination reveals that they are rusted, and any weight exceeding 100 lbs. placed upon them causes them to break. The twin links of chain that hang from the ceiling (each is about 6' long and ends at about eye level to a human viewing from the doorway) are in better condition, though the signs of rust are beginning to show on them as well. These were originally used to support a large iron circle, which in conjunction with ropes, was used to lower the remains of Shemnoata to the cavern below. These chains can support up to 1,000 pounds each.

Anyone who falls into the shaft suffers 3d6 hp damage and must contend with 40 feet of water. (Drowning rules apply.) Considering the levels of the PCs in this module, this will be most certainly fatal. Before the PCs attempt to make a descent here, the DM should gently hint at the extreme danger.

by Aaron Williams

SPOOKY...
I THINK THIS IS SOME KIND OF TOMB, GUYS!
BEGONE! LET THE DEAD REST, LEST THEY RISE AGAIN...
BUT HENCHMEN WILL BE PERFECTLY SAFE! THEY CAN COME ON DOWN AND TAKE AS MUCH TREASURE AS THEY WANT!
SORRY. I LEFT MY "GULLIBLE" SIGN AT HOME.

14. Shemnoata's Tomb.

Lowering yourself down the shaft, you emerge through the ceiling of a large cavern. Though the ceiling is high here, perhaps 20 feet, the cavern is really little more than a wide ledge around the shaft that continues to drop past the cavern below.

Arranged about the ledge are several piles of rubble, a square table of dark wood, and a black sarcophagus pushed against the southeastern wall. Like the cavern above, this place is decorated with a skull motif. Several large chalk drawings of jawless skulls adorn the walls, and you can see several real skulls stacked atop the rubble piles.

This cavern serves as the tomb of Shemnoata, the former pirate chieftain. Originally of Hepmonaland blood, Shemnoata was widely known as a merciless pirate who was also a great witchdoctor. His name is still whispered with fear and awe in the Lordship of the Isles. What is not widely known is that Shemnoata was a necromancer whose dabblings were not limited to his enemies. These catacombs were originally constructed so that he could practice his foul arts away from the disapproving eyes of some of his fellow pirates.

Though the room may look dangerous, there are no hidden dangers lurking about the cavern (except Shemnoata's body, but even this poses no immediate danger). The air is damp and cold, with a salty current swirling from the pit below. A thin coat of moisture covers the entire cavern and its contents, leaving the floors slippery and causing wooden furnishings to become rotten.

The table is crowded with objects, and due to its rotting state and the weight of these objects, any rough jostling causes it to collapse into a heap, sending objects spilling across the floor and perhaps into the pit. The following items are spread across the table: a silver urn (worth 150 gp) carved with meaningless runes and containing a bit of red sand, a brass lantern decorated with a linking skull pattern (worth 30 gp), two rusting cutlasses, a dagger in a rotting leather sheath, two human skulls (their lower jaws missing), a folded rotting black cloth (Shemnoata's flag), 55 sp, 32 gp, 112 cp, and a large book bound in shark skin and closed with a brass latch. This book was Shemnoata's spell book, and though it is not aligned, many dark deeds have been performed with its magic. As a result, any mage who studies from this book, who is not of evil alignment, must spend twice the time to memorize the chosen spell. This is because the book exudes a lurking malice that distracts and disrupts the concentration of those who understand compassion. The book contains the following spells: *affect normal fires, chill touch, find familiar, spider climb, spook, unseen servant; darkness 15' radius, ray of enfeeblement, spectral hand, summon swarm, web; shadow monsters*. The book once contained other spells, but many of the pages are damaged past recognition, and only the above spells are still intact.

The black sarcophagus is made from oak, though it has been stained. The lid is merely set atop the frame and can be easily removed. The inside is filled with brine and tarred to prevent seepage. The brown-black body of a man is clearly visible beneath the brine. His leathery skin is drawn tight across his protruding bones, and he is completely unadorned except for a pair of jade bracers (worth 500 gp for the set) and a single gold coin placed over each of his eyes. Each of these coins has a jawless skull motif on both faces. This is the remains of Shemnoata, the chieftain of the ancient pirates. The body is not animated (for now) and can be looted at the PCs see fit. If the PCs loot any portion of this tomb, see "Concluding the Adventure" below.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs discover the ghasts and their role in Restenford's recent troubles and then eliminate them, Andrella Restenford gladly pays them their promised reward. She also orders them to speak of the whole affair to no one. She is pleased that the whole situation is over and just wants to get back to her plans for improving Restenford. If the PCs express interest in further exploration of the catacombs, Andrella allows it if they agree to map the area and take notes concerning the conditions they find. In addition, she

also demands a 20% levy on all treasure brought back from the catacombs. If they impressed Captain Starsen earlier in the "An Offer You Can't Refuse" section, he speaks on the PCs behalf now. As a result, Andrella agrees to a 10% levy.

There are other considerations for the PCs, however. If the PCs learn about Selmo's involvement in the whole affair, they might confront Father Sedrick. If they do, and Andrella has not yet been informed, Sedrick begs them not to tell her. He explains that the Baroness already hates the Phaulkon order and that this information might be enough for her to ruin the abbey's reputation forever. Her disapproval of the abbey has already contributed heavily to the Phaulkon order's waning condition. Instead, he asks the PCs to inform the Baroness that the undead in the catacombs were responsible for the recent troubles, and that the PCs do not know what prompted the creatures' attack. These are dangerous lies, and under other circumstances Father Sedrick would never ask them of the PCs, but he fears for the future of his order.

Father Sedrick hastens to mention to the PCs that he realizes Brother Selmo must be punished for his actions, however misguided they might have been. If Brother Selmo is privy to this conversation with the PCs, he is quick to agree with Father Sedrick on these matters. He adds that he is willing to submit to any punishment that Father Sedrick presents. Father Sedrick proposes to the PCs that Brother Selmo travel with them for the next two years as their henchman, to aid them in return for their help to the order. In addition, if the PCs agree, Brother Selmo might perform some good deeds that please Phaulkon and help atone for his misguided actions. Also, if the PCs allow Selmo to retain some of the wealth that he helps them to collect in their adventures, then perhaps he may help alleviate the Phaulkon Abbey's financial burden after all.

On the other hand, if Andrella Restenford does learn of Selmo's role in the recent troubles, she is furious. Father Sedrick immediately tells her everything he has learned from Selmo in an effort to appease her. Selmo confesses all, hoping to spare the order Andrella's wrath. Andrella, confronted with their honest confessions, is unable to publicly eliminate the abbey's presence from Restenford. She does, however, sentence Selmo to five years' imprisonment in Castle Restenford's dungeons. She also makes sure, indirectly, that the entire community knows that the order was responsible for the recent troubles, even if it was an accident. In a few weeks' time, when Pelltar returns from the

mainland, he quickly stands up for the order, reminding the populace that without Phaulkon's priests, the whole town may have fallen two years ago to pirates. This helps, but the damage has already been done. Phaulkon's Abbey has lost even more prestige with the locals and its days are numbered.

One last mystery also demands attention. The Holy Chalice of the Phaulkon may still be in Sandra's hands. If the PCs have not discovered her role in this whole business and have not retrieved it from her, the chalice remains lost for years to come. If the PCs recover it and return it to Father Sedrick, he is pleased but has other more pressing matters to attend to (see above). This leaves the PCs with the matter of Sandra herself. Good-aligned PCs should feel honor bound to see to it that she no longer lives on the streets. There are any number of possibilities, but if the matter is mentioned to Father Sedrick, he is happy to have the order care for the girl. PCs arranging for Sandra to live a better life, should be awarded 50 XP each. In addition, the PCs should also receive a 2,000 XP story reward, to be split among them, for successfully ridding the town of ghasts and rats. Further rewards may be suitable as well, depending upon the PCs' actions and the whims of the DM.

It is also possible that the PCs will discover the chalice's original purpose and try to put things back the way they were. This proves problematic at best, as the ghasts have to be confined to the catacombs before placing the chalice back upon its pedestal. This is only a temporary solution, as Father Sedrick is quick to point out. The ghasts are an old skeleton in the order's closet that should have been taken care of long ago. For the safety of the community, Father Sedrick insists that the undead be destroyed.

Restenford and its surroundings can also serve as a base for many more adventures. If the PCs have not explored beyond area **13**'s shaft, they may want to do so. If they do, and they loot Shemnoata's tomb, the pirate chieftain rises to pursue them, perhaps hounding them into their next adventures. Days after intruders leave his tomb with any of his possessions, Shemnoata rises from his briny grave as a mummy to seek out his stolen treasures. Shemnoata is almost mindless as an undead creature and relentlessly pursues his possessions until he has them or he is destroyed. If the PCs sell some of the treasures in town, a rash of mysterious murders occurs, with the killer coming for them next.

Beyond the confines of Restenford, other adventures also await. Perhaps the PCs may wish to help the Phaulkon order locate its lost burial crypts, not for plundering of course, but simply to recover some of the abbey's lost prestige. If the DM has access to the module *The Secret of Bone Hill*, there are many opportunities for adventure outside Restenford presented in that classic adventure as well.

Shemnoata (mummy): INT low; AL NE; AC 5; MV 6; HD 6+3; hp 33; THACO 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1–12; SA fear, touch causes disease; SD immune to spells that affect only the living; magical weapons to hit (but see below); SZ M; ML 20; *MM*/261 (mummy, variant). Shemnoata's fear aura is treated like a standard mummy's fear aura. Shemnoata's mummy rot is a horrible liquid infection of the lungs that is fatal in 1d12 weeks if untreated by a *cure disease* spell. For more information on the various possible effects of mummy rot consult *Van Richten's Guide to the Ancient Dead*.

Shemnoata can only be harmed by magical or special weapons. Magical weapons inflict half damage. "Special weapons" include any weapon found in the pirate catacombs. Against the mummy, these "special weapons" inflict full damage, even if they are non-magical.

If the PCs somehow destroy Shemnoata's body before he rises from the grave, his spirit still manages to cheat death in its quest for vengeance. In this case, Shemnoata returns as a spectre in 1–2 months, acting in much the same manner as already described. It should be remembered, however, that due to the spectre's weakness in the daylight, all of his attacks occur at night. Ω

Special thanks to our playtesters!

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Joe Rubinaccio
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Raymond Williamson
Larry Brown
Mike Oglesbee
Gregg Palastro
Jeff Palastro
Jim Regalla
Dave Deng
Craig Scott
Michele Debnam
Brian Debnam
Darrell Short

Who's hunting whom on Revular's Island?

WILDSPAWN

BY PAUL CULOTTA

A strange breed, indeed

Artwork by Steve Bryant
Cartography by Diesel

Paul would like to dedicate this adventure to his regular playtesters: Don & Summer Pierce, Sam Everly, Marty Horman, Barry Fritts, Todd Baughman, and Shari Culotta, all of whom have lost characters to his nefarious monsters and traps.

"Wildspawn" is an AD&D® adventure for 4–6 good or neutral PCs of levels 6–8 (about 35 total levels). A well balanced adventuring party works best, and it should include at least one cleric PC or access to healing magic. A ranger would also be useful.

The story starts in a fantasy kingdom called Lungardy, but the DM may use any setting that borders a large body of water. Although this adventure includes several aspects of the SPELLJAMMER® campaign setting, knowledge of the SPELLJAMMER rules is not necessary; indeed, the DM can run the adventure as a standard AD&D scenario. Prior to play, the DM should review the monster sheets on the aartuk and syllix included with the adventure, as well as the "Revular's Island Ecology" sidebar.

For the Players

Lungardy, a kingdom bordering the coast of the Mermaid Ocean, is on the verge of war with Ballastri, a powerful duchy to the north. Soon after you arrived, royal heralds brought you an invitation to meet with King Stephanos III.

At the appointed time, guards admit you to the palace, where military officers confer over map-strewn tables and messengers run to and fro on various errands. A herald ushers you to a small meeting room. There you meet King Stephanos, a distinguished older man who wears royal purple robes and a silver crown. At his side is a grim-looking army officer who wears the insignia of a Lungardian general. After introductions, the King says:

"Thank you for coming. Your reputation is well known, and I was delighted to hear you were visiting my fair kingdom. To put matters bluntly, I am asking you to go on a special mission, one you should find lucrative."

The general unrolls a map and lays it on the table. *[The DM should*

give the PCs a copy of the handout on page 34.]

"This is Revular's Island, which lies 100 miles off our coast. Three months ago, a merchant-explorer, Captain-general Revular, discovered it and went ashore, finding the place full of strange yet harmless animals, unusual plant life, and a central mountain. The island's unique trees are made of a tough, lightweight wood, and rich ore samples from the mountain contain iron. Revular named the place after himself, claimed it for Lungardy, and sailed home with the news.

"I was overjoyed with the wood and ore specimens he brought back, and I financed an expedition of fifty colonists, twenty soldiers, and a galleon to establish a small settlement with a sawmill and mine. Revular left with the greatest of expectations, but only a month later, fifteen survivors returned, full of horrifying stories of man-eating bramble monsters and heavily armed lizard worms that erupted from the forests and the ground, killing or carrying off their comrades. Their tales of terror spread through my people like wildfire, and some of the clergy declared the place cursed by the gods. Had I ordered anyone to return, I might have faced a revolt.

"That brings me to why I called you here. I am on the verge of war with the Duchy of Ballastri. My generals tell me this could be a protracted struggle that might deplete our resources. I need that wood and ore on Revular's Island, so here is my offer: a Lungardian war galley will transport you there. Go ashore and take care of whatever is there so that I can safely colonize the place. If you are successful, I will make you governors and provide funding to start a colony. With sales of wood and ore, you will become rich in a short time. I know that this sounds difficult, but renowned adventurers such as you might prevail. What do you say?"

King Stephanos provides not only transport but also any ordinary supplies the PCs might require. If pressed, he upgrades the PCs' armor by one point, but he provides no magical assistance as he needs every potion, spellbook, and miscellaneous magical item in the upcoming conflict.

If the PCs have no wish to become colony governors and settle down, King Stephanos offers them a flat reward of 10,000 gp, payable upon verification that the island is safe.

The PCs might want to interview survivors of the previous expedition. Award whomever thinks of this 100 bonus XP. Unfortunately, only one of the original survivors, Sergeant Milakos of the Lungardian marines, remains. The rest went insane, fled the country, or died.

Sergeant Milakos is a grizzled, battle-scarred veteran. Milakos is currently serving aboard one of the Lungardian galleys in port. He can recount the following story:

"Ye want to know of Revular's Island? Well, let me tell ye, it's a place of death, that's wot it be. Aye, all was quiet for the first two weeks. The colonists built their homes and a sawmill while we marines built the stockade. There was naught to do except pull guard duty, go on patrols, and do some huntin. The island hosted small pig-headed creatures that hopped about on furry legs. Tasty things they were and not that tough to snare. And there was a nearby freshwater stream. A virtual paradise it was, except for black birds that cried and hooted at us whenever we got near 'em.

Then we was attacked one night. I was on duty, and let me tell ye, we were caught flat-footed. Thick tree things, bristling with thorns, came climbin' o'er our walls, and there was these lizard worm things, wieldin' strange swords and crossbows, that got inside the compound, don't ask me how. I've ne'er seen such chaos and confusion in twenty years of service, and it was a miracle that some of us cut our way back to the ship. I tell ye, I still have nightmares of that place. Want my advice? Don't go. Ye'll have better chances fightin' the Duke of Ballastri's troops."

PCs might want to examine the samples that Revular brought back. King Stephanos has them stored in the treasury and makes them available. The wood is indeed very tough and lightweight, ideal for making javelin and arrow shafts, wooden shields, and other items. But it is definitely a wood that no druid has ever seen. As to the ore, a PC with a mining proficiency or secondary skill can determine that it is a high-grade iron ore.

Finally, the PCs might want to poke around to discover more information. Most inhabitants shudder in fear at the mention of Revular's Island, and rumors abound as to what really happened. The DM can be as outlandish and creative as he wants. There is a small chance (10% per PC) that someone remembers that a week before Revular's discovery, several people noticed that the full moon eclipsed for just a minute or two. The next day, a wandering gypsy seer prophesied that this sign foretold imminent evil, and most of the populace believes that the eclipse foretold the colonists doom or the upcoming war with Ballastri.

For the Dungeon Master

Revular's Island looks like an island, but it is really a huge spelljamming asteroid belonging to an evil race called the syllix. The temporary eclipse of the moon occurred when the flying asteroid blocked the moonlight prior to its descent 100 miles away.

The syllix asteroid is not only a base for their spelljamming ships, it is also an elaborate trap to lure fortune hunters, colonists, and the like. Every few decades, the syllix go through a breeding stage known as "the eruption." When it occurs, the syllix spelljamming ships depart the base to capture more spelljamming vessels. They man captured vessels with reduced prize crews and slowly expand their fleet.

Meanwhile, the syllix who remain on the asteroid land it on a planet where it appears to be a lush, attractive island in order to capture and eat explorers and colonists. When a syllix eats the equivalent of a human-sized person during an eruption, its hermaphroditic reproductive system kicks in, and a new fully grown syllix is born after 24 hours of gestation. When these monsters have eaten and

Revular's Island Ecology

While running the adventure, the DM should must keep in mind that the island's ecosystem is carefully balanced. The underbrush and trees provide oxygen for the air bubble that encompasses the island while it is in Wildspace. Within the soil and the trees, numerous strange-looking insects and worms thrive; they pollinate the vegetation, provide soil nutrients, and serve as food for the hoo-hah birds. The trees provide nesting areas for the birds, and the underbrush is food for the pigalopes. In the center of the island is a large fresh water lake that has numerous projecting channels (all overgrown with brush for camouflage) for keeping vegetation irrigated. The lake also provides fresh water for the higher forms of life. The bassnip fish in the lake provide food for the birds and the syllix.

The hoo-hah birds are food for the aartuk, which can easily lie camouflaged to snare them (although the aartuk are more than happy to eat any invaders that come their way). The syllix eat not only the bassnips but also the pigalopes. Notably, there is enough food to sustain the syllix until their eruption cycle is complete.

Specific plant forms: The only plant detailed here is the strange tree that King Stephanos is so intent on harvesting. The DM should do his best to concoct and describe other plant forms that are exotic and strange. Cacti that sprout moss, pine bushes that grow daisies, and small 3' tall apple trees (with toxic blue apples) are all possible.

The trees on Revular's Island resemble cypress trees with pine needles and yellow flowers. Each tree grows up to 100' tall. Wood from this tree is extremely hard, durable, and lightweight. Missile weapons made from it have a 25% range bonus, and wooden shields are especially resilient. All items made of this wood receive a +1 bonus to item saving throws.

Specific animal forms: All of these animals originated on other worlds. They require food, water, and oxygen as do animals on the PCs' home world. Only three types of animals are listed here, and the DM may wish to add other alien species.

Pigalope: INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 15; HD 1–1; #AT nil; Dmg 0; SZ S; ML 4; XP 7. Pigalopes look like 2' tall furry kangaroos with pig-like faces. They eat underbrush, but when hungry, they dig into the ground for tree roots. Their meat tastes like gamy turkey. Pigalope hides are tough and wiry and can be fashioned into hide armor. They do not fight and flee when confronted, squealing noisily.

Hoo-hah bird: INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 2, Fl 24 (B); HD 1–4 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SZ T; ML 5; XP 7. Hoo-hah birds resemble black, 2' tall bluejays. Although not aggressive, they are annoying: whenever anything not native to Revular's Island comes within sight of one, it emits a shrill shriek: "Hoo-Hah! Hoo-Hah! Hoo-Hah!" If cornered or defending its nest, a hoo-hah bird attacks fearlessly and, for some reason, focuses its attacks on the nose of its opponent. To humans and demihumans, hoo-hah birds taste terrible.

Bassnip: INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV Sw 18; HD 1–1; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1–3; SA small body part amputation; SZ S; ML 7; XP 15. With trout-like pink bodies, bassnip have projecting horizontal toothy jaws that resemble pinking shears. On a hit, a bassnip has a 15% chance of snipping off an uncovered body part such as a finger or ear. Otherwise it damages armor by 1 AC if the armor fails to make a save vs. crushing blow. The bassnip survive on algae and other plants in the lake. Bassnip are poisonous to any human or demihuman who eats one. Just one bite causes the eater to make a saving throw vs. poison with failure resulting in death in 2–12 turns. A successful save results in the eater being ill for 24 hours.

spawned so many new syllix that the island cannot support them, they fly their asteroid base to a rendezvous point where they meet the fleet and transfer the new syllix to the captured vessels. At that point, the syllix fleet, now with full crews, disperses into Wildspace and goes on an orgy of killing, looting, and terror.

The pigalopes, hoo-hah birds, and other "ordinary" creatures that exist on Revular's Island are only enough to sustain the syllix who live there. The animals' biochemistry, however, does not trigger the syllix reproduction; only other food, such as the humanoid colonists, does.

They need colonists for another reason. A rare few of the syllix newborn are star-mages, blind syllix with an innate ability to work the unique syllixian spelljamming helms. These creatures are not fully grown when born; they need three years of special nourishment, specifically enzymes from the living brains of creatures with high intelligence or wisdom, such as wizards, bards, and clerics. The syllix take these unfortunate captives to special chambers where they endure a long, painful existence as their captors harvest their brain enzymes to nurture the young star-mages.

Besides the syllix, which live underground, Revular's island hosts a band of aartuk which live on the surface. The two lawful evil races are close allies since the syllixian desire to plunder and loot Wildspace is consistent with the warlike nature of the aartuk.

Thus, the PCs are entering a carefully laid trap. The syllix, based on past experience, know that humanoid races lust for the precious resources (trees, ore, and so forth) on the island. They allow the first small scouting party (such as Revular's) to explore and leave unmolested. After a group of colonists arrive, however, the syllix and aartuk allies attack. The syllix burrow up from the ground into the middle of the colonists' camp while the aartuk easily climb over any walls. When the fight is over, they take spellcasters to the star-mage feeding chambers and devour the rest.

After the first attack, the syllix know that whoever sent the colonists will dispatch a military force to inves-

Island Random Encounters

During daylight, encounters occur on a roll of 1 on d6, rolled once per three hours. At night, encounters occur on a roll of 1 on d12, rolled once per night.

1. Pigalopes. The PCs come upon a small herd of pigalopes feeding on underbrush. Once the animals see them, they hop off, squealing madly. This may (10% chance) attract an aartuk patrol (see below).

2. Hoo-hah bird. A hoo-hah bird follows the PCs, shrieking "Hoo-hah! Hoo-hah! Hoo-hah!" Every round there is a 10% chance (cumulative) of attracting an aartuk patrol and a 5% chance of attracting another hoo-hah bird. Besides killing the bird, the PCs may try to scare it away. A near-miss from a missile weapon will do; a *silence 15' radius* also works.

3. Syllix Hunting Party. A group of syllix on the surface is hunting for pigalopes. They immediately attack the PCs and only take as prisoners those PCs who demonstrate spell use. They have specially modified light crossbows that shoot three bolts every other round (one round to fire and the next to reload).

After their initial volley, the syllix rush in to melee with jagged-edged short swords. Once the PCs dispatch six syllix, one flees underground to warn the base while the others cover his retreat. If he succeeds, no underground syllix can be surprised.

Syllix (12): INT average; AL LE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+1; hp 19 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1 (crossbow or short sword); Dmg 1–8 or by weapon type; SZ M (7' tall); ML 14; XP 175; see page 44.

The syllix have no treasure. In addition to the strange crossbows, large sacks, and swords, each syllix carries nine bolts. Note that if PCs use the syllix weapons, they suffer non-proficiency penalties. One of the syllix has a metal rectangular object, a key for one of the sortie hole lids (see "Surface Encounters," area **3**).

PCs can follow the syllix tracks to a sortie hole and find their underground through this encounter.

4. Smoke! Depending on the PCs' location, they see either smoke from the cooking fires of the aartuk clearing (see "Surface Encounters," area **6**) or a plume of smoke and/or steam from the central mountain. The latter comes from the forge and water purification system that the syllix have inside the mountain (see "Underground Encounters," areas **6** and **7**). If this encounter occurs at night, the PCs hear a large hissing sound as steam is released from the mountain.

5. Aartuk Patrol. The aartuk regularly patrol the surface of Revular's Island and attack any invaders. It is extremely difficult to surprise one of these patrols (1-in-12 chance) due to their sensitivity to motion and smell and their infravision. When the PCs approach a patrol, the aartuk hide in the trees and bush, where their natural camouflage blends into the terrain. They have an 80% chance of going undetected while PCs are 30 or more feet away, and a 60% chance when the PCs are within 30 feet. (After the first encounter, the aartuks' chances are only 40% and 30% respectively, and PC rangers and druids miss spotting them only 15% of the time).

Once the PCs get within 30 feet, three aartuk attempt to entangle PCs with their long tongues while the other two shoot pellets. On subsequent rounds, all aartuk attempt to entangle the PCs with their tongues and crush them, and in each such round the ruckus has a 20% chance of attracting a hoo-hah bird. The shrieking bird, in turn, may attract another aartuk patrol (arriving in 1–6 rounds) or more hoo-hah birds. No more than two other aartuk patrols are close enough to join the battle. If the PCs destroy ten of these patrols, the remaining aartuk stay close to the former colony (see "Surface Encounters," area **1**) and their cooking fires (see "Surface Encounters," area **6**) and the PCs encounter patrols of eight syllix instead (same statistics as those in random encounter #3, above).

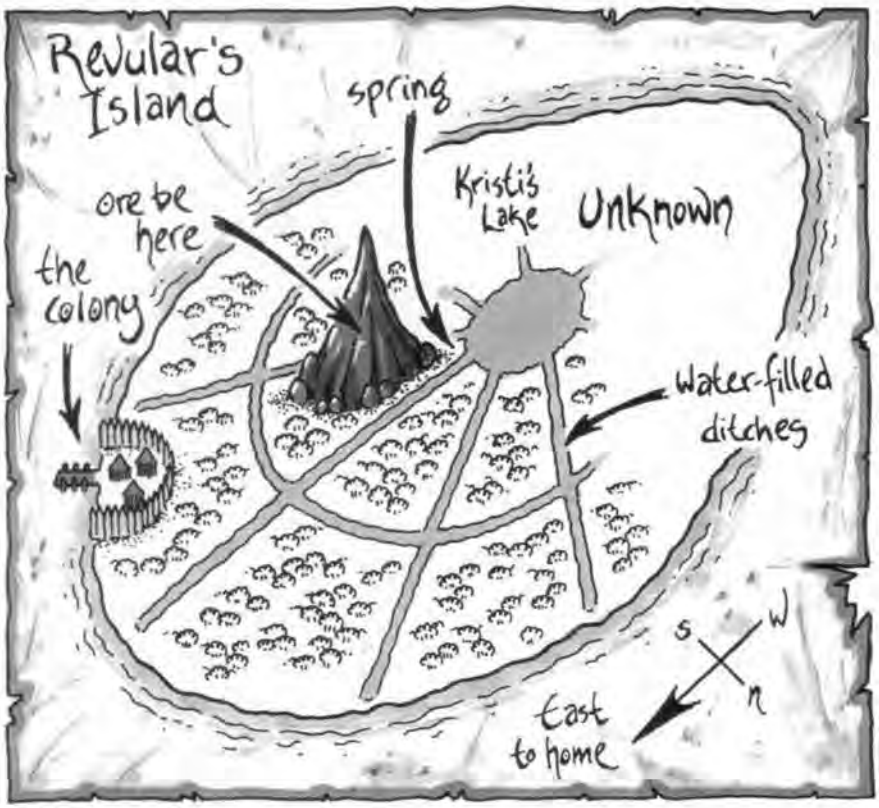
Aartuk (5): INT average; AL LE; AC 6; MV 6; HD 2+1; hp 15 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–8 (pellets); SA entangling tongue (Dexterity check to avoid); SZ M; ML 12; XP 120; see page 43.

6. Battleground. (Use this only once.) Burn marks on trees, a single crushed helmet, and dried blood stains mark the spot where a Ballastrian expedition met its fate at the hands (er, limbs) of the aartuk. After the battle, the aartuk plundered their belongings and took the dead and captives off to their clearing (see "Surface Encounters," area **6**). It happened several days ago, and any tracking attempts have a –6 penalty. Twenty feet away from the clearing is a single glove—a *gauntlet of ogre power*—that an aartuk accidentally dropped.

tigate. A moderately-sized force is no match for them, and the soldiers wind up sharing the same fate as the colonists.

After this second attack, the syllix lift their island spelljamming base and move it far off to another location where it is unlikely anyone has heard of them. They repeat this process as often as needed until the eruption cycle is complete. Then they return to Wildspace to rendezvous with their other spelljamming ships.

The only flaw with the syllixian plan is that they expect a moderately sized (and thus easily detectable) military force to arrive after the first colonists are wiped out. They don't foresee only a small group of PCs infiltrating their base. Perhaps a small band of skilled and resourceful adventurers can succeed where countless others have failed.



Exploring Revular's Island

Before leaving on the Lungardian galley, the PCs can load whatever supplies and equipment they need, but the vessel has no accommodations for mounts. After an uneventful journey, the galley captain provides the PCs a longboat to get ashore, but he refuses to risk any sailors or marines going with them. Indeed, while the PCs explore, he patrols out of sight. On the fifth night after the PCs land, he returns to a rendezvous point to pick them up. The captain insists that the heroes leave his ship under cover of darkness.

As they row to shore, PCs see the following:

> Looming before you is Revular's Island, its outline visible in the moonlight. Off in the distance you see the shape of what looks like a central mountain, perhaps a burned out volcano. Closer to shore you make out the forms of large trees. The place is absolutely silent, with the only sound you hear coming from the splashing of your oars.

The PCs can debark wherever they desire. Once it is daylight, they see the central mountain and the various types of vegetation, and occasionally they hear a bird-like sound ("Hoo-hah! Hoo-hah!").

PCs who have spells or items that allow flight get a far better view of the island. Depending on their height and location, they can get a view of the mountain, vegetation, lake (area **3**), and the clearing where the aartuk have their daily feast (area **6**). The clearing should not be visible unless flying PCs are within one mile and at least 300 high. PCs at least 1,000 feet up might notice (Intelligence check with –2 penalty) a geometric design: certain parts of the island (irrigation ditches) are slightly greener than others. PCs who fly within 50 feet of the treetops attract 1d4 hoo-hah birds (see random encounter #2).

The water surrounding the island shore is 300' deep. PCs with nautical backgrounds or proficiencies might also notice that there are no marks on the shore that indicate the usual tide lines.

PCs with water-breathing spells or magical items might try exploring underwater. Depending on lighting and the PCs' location, they could find an anchor line or a glass-like viewing portal (see horizontal view map and underground encounter area **4**). Of course, the DM could have sharks or other marine denizens attack the PCs. If the heroes find and cut an anchor line (AC 0, 100 hp), the syllix immediately detect the base drifting, raise all other anchors, and fly away.

While the PCs explore the island, they might encounter some of the indigenous wildlife (see "Island Random Encounters"). Generally, it is safer for the PCs to travel at night because most island creatures sleep then.

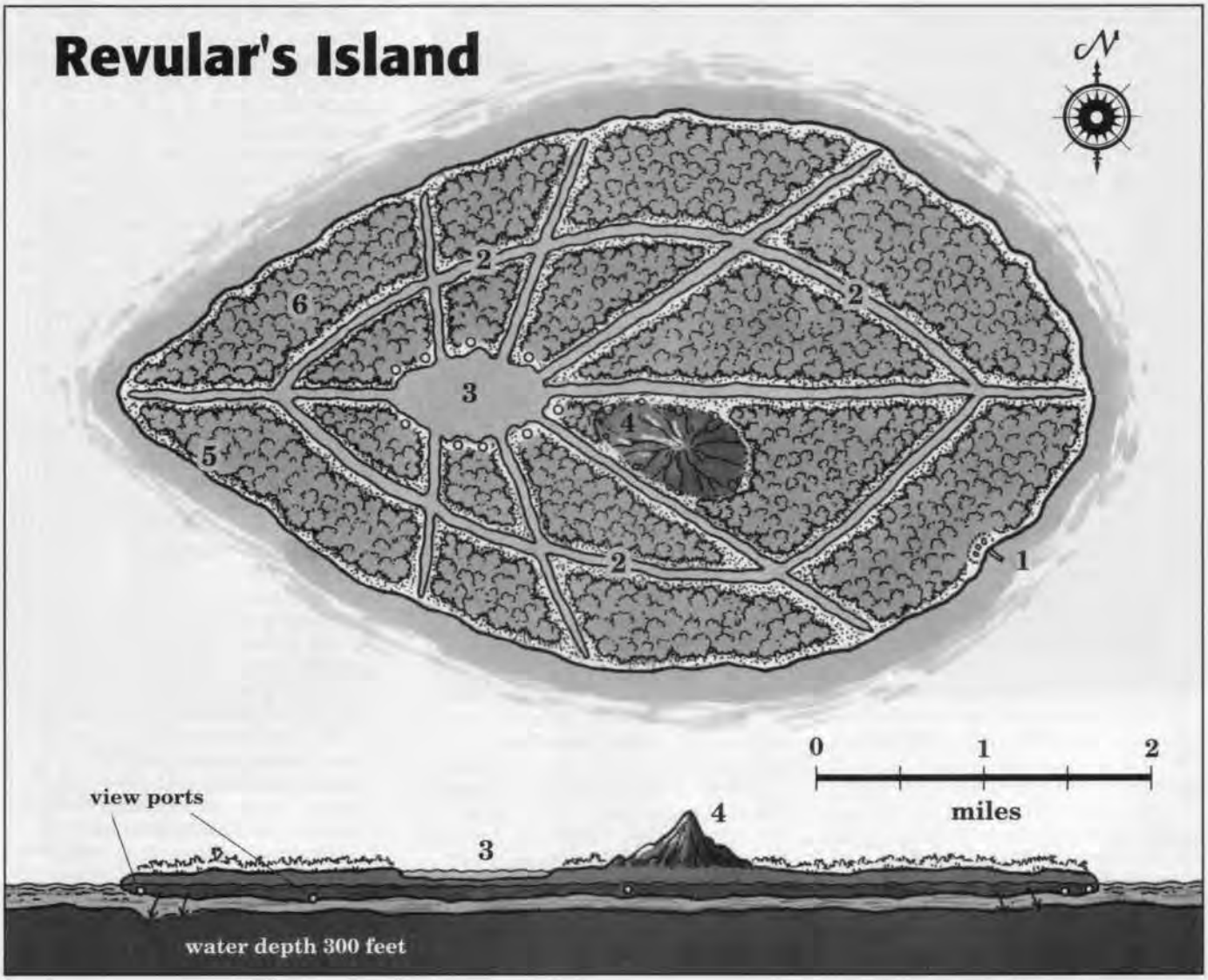
Surface Encounters

1. Former Colony. Several abandoned buildings, a stockade, and a pier mark the spot of Revular's ill-fated colony. Although signs of bloodshed and fighting exist, there are no corpses to be found. One building contains tools for mining, and another building contains a sawmill. The equipment has just begun to rust. There is a 20' clearance between the stockade walls and the surrounding woods.

Searching the buildings, the PCs find forty usable arrows and three flasks of flammable oil. They also find Revular's diary, which recounts the colonists daily progress. Nothing in the diary gives any indication that the colonists suspected they were in danger. The diary mentions the hoo-hah birds and pigalopes as species encountered by the settlers. It also mentions the lake and irrigation ditches, the latter mentioned as "evidence of some lost civilization," and it states that Revular named the lake Kristi's Lake after his wife. Finally, an entry reveals that one of the colonists, a druid, determined that the lake's fish are poisonous.

On the grounds are three strange depressions, each about four feet in diameter. PCs with a mining proficiency or skill can make a skill check to realize that they are filled-in shafts. The syllix used their umber hulks to tunnel underneath the colony. After the attack, the umber hulks filled them in.

Outside the stockade, sixteen aartuk keep watch over the ruins in the



hope that someone returns. Once PCs are visible, the aartuk boil out of the surrounding woods and climb over the walls. Half shoot pellets as covering fire while the remainder close to within 30 feet and try to entangle the PCs with their tongues.

Aartuk (16): INT average; AL LE; AC 6; MV 6; HD 2+1; hp 16, 15 (×2), 14 (×4), 13 (×8), 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–8; SA entangling tongue (Dexterity check to avoid); SZ M; ML 12; XP 120; see page 43.

2. Irrigation Ditches. Fed from the lake (area **3**), these irrigation ditches end right before the coastline, a clue that they are not natural. The ditches keep the trees and other plant life well-watered to maintain the illusion that this is an attractive, verdant island. Each ditch is 10' wide and 6' deep. Vegetation overhangs all the ditches.

3. Kristi's Lake. This freshwater lake is about 100' deep. While the PCs explore along the shore, there is a 10% chance per turn (non-cumulative) that a hoo-hah bird spots them. From the shoreline, they occasionally see bassnip. On the east end of the lake, an apparently natural spring of fresh water flows from the mountain into the lake. The "spring" actually comes from the syllix purification chamber. (See underground area **7**). At eight locations, irrigation ditches leave the lake to other parts of the island. Underwater screens keep the bassnip from leaving the lake's confines.

PCs who explore the waterline discover that the lake shore, just like the ocean coastline, does not gradually slope into the water; it goes straight down. Looking around the lakefront PCs can find eight trees with strange symbols carved into the trunks. They designate berthing areas for syllix spelljamming vessels, since syllix generally use those designed to land in water (hammerships, squidships, galleons). Presently, no vessels are in the lake as they are all out trying to capture more ships for the syllix spawned during the eruption.

Twenty feet behind each tree with a carving is a sortie hole, all but one covered with dirt, leaves, and twigs. The uncovered one is used by syllix who come to the surface to hunt or fish. The chances of finding a sortie hole is 1–2 on d6, although rangers, elves, and druids find one on a roll of 1–3. Moving the ground cover aside reveals a 4'-diameter locked metal lid with a two-inch slot in its center. There are four ways to open the lid:

- Up to four PCs may combine their strength to wrench it open; this requires a combined Bend Bars roll (rolled by the character with the highest Strength);
- a *knock* spell;
- using a "key" recovered from a syllix (see random encounter #3);
- a rogue PC using his open locks skill (–20% penalty due to the alien nature of the lock).

When the PCs open a sortie hole, read the following:

> A steeply slanting circular hole disappears into utter darkness. The sides of the hole are made of neither earth nor rock, but a strange crystalline material that radiates a dim pink glow. The hole seems perfectly round and smooth, but every five feet there is a round fist-sized rib-like protrusion of this strange material. You smell a distinct aroma reminding you of slightly burned bacon.

PCs who make a mining or stonemasonry check realize that the ribbed protrusions are like support beams in a mine. Chipping away at the crystalline material is difficult, taking at least three turns to get a hand-sized chunk out, and while the PCs are so engaged, there is a 20% chance per turn of attracting syllix from below (same statistics as listed in random encounter #3). The material is unlike anything the PCs have ever seen, but once they pry out a chunk they find ordinary rock and dirt underneath.

During their exploration in the underground, the PCs find this material glazing most surface areas. The syllix secrete this stuff from their bodies in liquid form, and it takes twelve hours to solidify. The material, although organic, blocks the use of spells like *stone shape, dimension door,* and *teleport*. Its glow keeps the underground well-lit (no infravision). The hardened crystal dissolves when doused in wine, rubbing lineaments, or any other liquids containing alcohol; lightning, fire, water, and acid have no effect.

Normally syllix emerge from these sortie holes to hunt, fight invaders, man their vessels, or confer with the aartuk. Each hole descends at a steep angle, requiring the PCs to use rope, mountaineering equipment, or some other way to climb down safely. The crystalline sides of the hole are somewhat smooth (–15% chance to all climbing checks), and PCs who slip get a rough, bumpy slide and suffer 1d8 hp damage. After a 75' descent, each tube winds and turns for miles but eventually leads to one of the syllix living chambers (see "Underground Encounters," area **2**).

4. Mountain. A 2,000' high bare-rock mountain juts out from the center of Revular's island. PCs with a mining proficiency or secondary skill recognize numerous places where someone chipped away samples, and these are far too many to have been taken by the colonists. Indeed, these places are where other victims came and prospected.

Behind a large bush on the west side of the mountain is a sortie-hole (see area **3**). This sortie-hole is at ground level, and the tunnel heads straight to the east, leading to the tinker gnomes workshop (see "Underground Encounters," area **7**).

During the day, smoke billows from the top of the mountain, and once every hour a burst of steam vents into the atmosphere. PCs may explore these phenomena by flying (if they have the means) or climbing up. The face of the mountain is extremely steep and requires at least one PC with mountaineering proficiency plus equipment.

Any hero who gets within 10 feet of the summit has a 1-in-6 chance of noticing a stone cover to an opening in the side of the mountain, just below the summit. There are four such covers, each 5' × 5', and they are viewing areas from underground encounter areas **8–10**. These covers may be opened from the outside by using a *knock* spell or a ring from a *chime of opening*.

5. Longboat. A thicket of bushes conceals a longboat that belonged to an adventuring party sent by the Duke of Ballastri. After spies told him of the island, he sent his own heroes to explore it. Those adventurers met untimely ends, and the PCs might find this out from further exploration. Inside the longboat are five waterskins, several large sacks with food (a total of 24 meals), two quivers of sheaf arrows, and two 50' coils of rope. If a player has lost his PC, a kind DM might insert an NPC survivor from the Ballastrian party here so that the player can continue with the adventure.

6. Cookfires. Once a day, the aartuk cook their daily meal in a large 200' diameter clearing where they hold spitted pigalopes and hoo-hah birds over the flames on wooden spits. PCs who carefully approach this area have a reasonable chance of sneaking up and observing the area (only 1-in-10 chance of being detected by one of the few guards). Thirty aartuk feed while five others stand guard in the surrounding trees. The hoo-hah birds know about this clearing and avoid it.

> In a clearing, dozens of 6' tall thorny plant-like creatures cook spitted chunks of meat and birds. A long tongue flickers from each creature's central stalk, and they all make clicking noises as they eat. At the north end of the clearing is a thick, black-barked tree with various items hanging from its branches by ropes or strings. You see a glove, a spear, a helmet, and other things you cant make out. This trees branches are lush with sickly yellowish-green leaves. Something has carved a tall image of the clicking creatures at the bottom of the trunk. About 20' up you can see a 8'-diameter hollow opening. Several clay urns, stacked two high, ring the bottom of the tree.

The PCs have a prime opportunity to cast some major spells in a surprise attack. After the initial round, the five aartuk hidden among the trees maneuver to outflank the PCs while those in the clearing charge. From a dense thicket behind the carved tree an aartuk elder emerges and casts spells to aid the aartuk

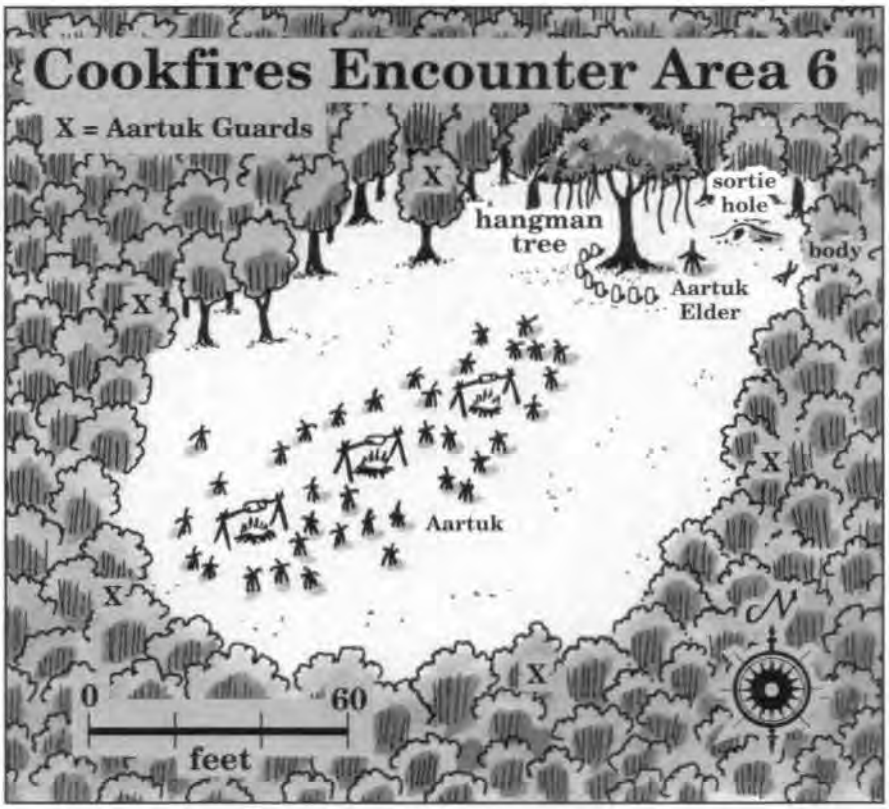
attack. It first casts *magical stone*, using three pellets against PC spellcasters to disrupt spellcasting. Once it has used the three pellets, it casts *darkness* on the PC causing the most damage to the aartuk. If PCs close with the elder, it conjures a *flame blade* to wield in melee combat and chants (which sounds like a rhythmic clicking). Note that the elder may not use its tongue-entangling while chanting, and it melees while under the protective cover of the tree.

Aartuk (35): INT average; AL LE; AC 6; MV 6; HD 2+1; hp 15 (×10), 14 (×8), 13 (×11), 12 (×6); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–8; SA entangling tongue (Dexterity check to avoid); SZ M; ML 12; XP 120; see page 43.

Aartuk elder: INT high; AL LE; AC 2; MV 6; HD 5+1; hp 37; #AT 1; Dmg 5–30; SA spells; SZ L (8' tall); ML 16; XP 3,000; see page 43. The elder wears a brass *torque of protection +3* (as the ring) around its head stalk. A PC may don this item (the torque expands to fit over the head and then closes tightly around the wearer's neck), but whoever puts it on may not remove it except by cutting it off or making a *wish*. Another disadvantage is that no other worn magical items (e.g., rings, gloves, hats, boots, etc.) function while the torque is worn.

The huge carved tree is an off-world species of hangman tree that the aartuk have nurtured with sacrifices for generations, believing it to be an avatar of their deity. The aartuk are safe from its hunger since the tree only craves flesh and blood, not other plant-based life. Its branches extend out 20 feet, and any PC wandering into this area is subject to three attacks from the tree's strangling nooses. Whenever a PC gets within 30 feet of the tree, it exudes its a perfume-like hallucinatory odor (an orchid-like smell) that permeates a 100' radius around it. PCs who fail their saving throw vs. poison believe that the tree is quite ordinary. The odor has a different effect on the aartuk: they recognize the smell as the trees defensive mechanism, stop their eating, and immediately start searching the area.

Hangman tree: INT low; AL NE; AC 1 (trunk)/3 (vines); MV 0 (2 per hour); HD 8; hp 64 (plus each vine has 17 hp); THAC0 7; #AT 3; Dmg 1–3 (vines); 3–12 (central maw); SD hallucinatory perfume; vulnerable to elemental attacks; MR 95%; SZ G (80' tall); ML 15; XP 3,000; *MM*/293 (plant, carnivorous—modified).



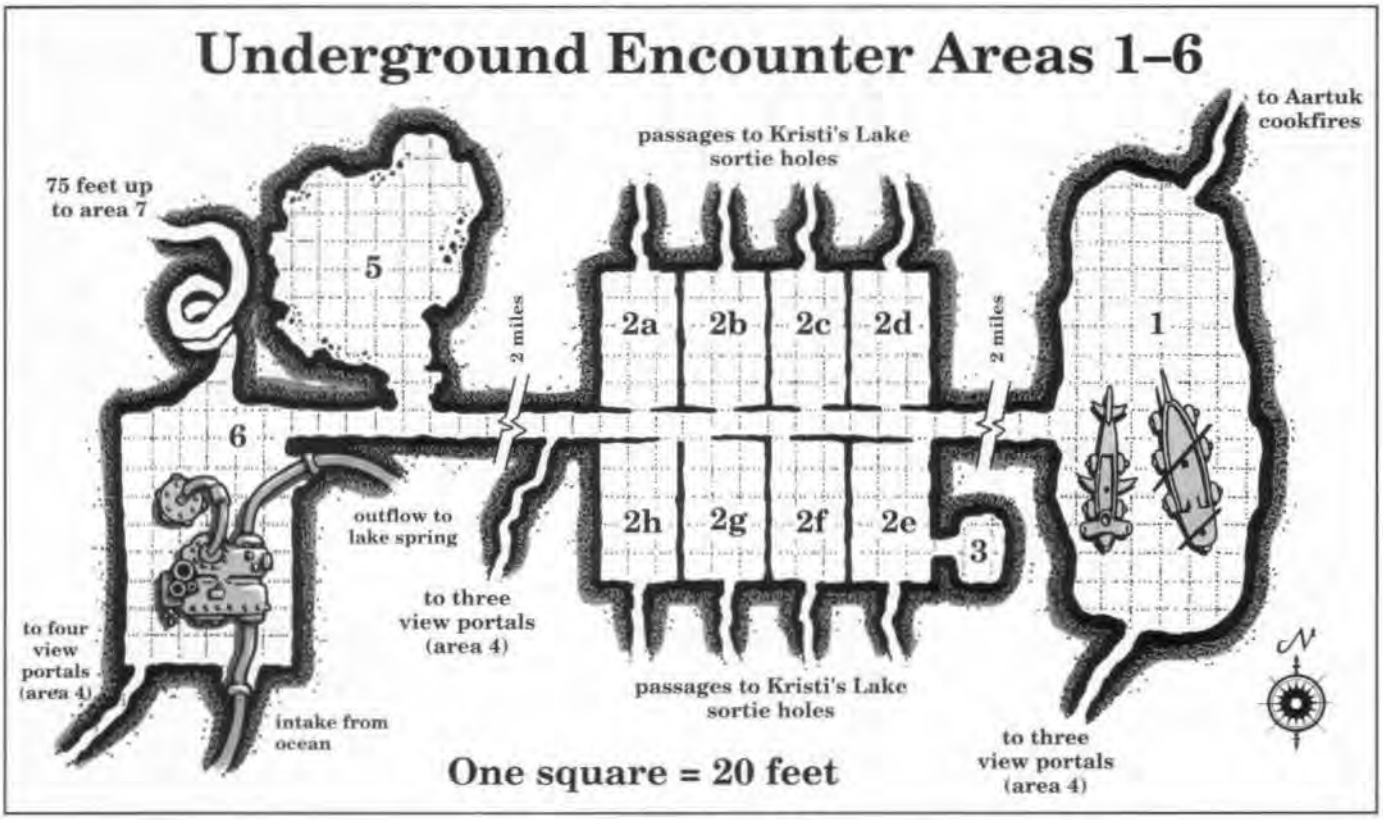
The objects hanging from the hangman tree are trophies captured by the aartuk. The tree holds them in vines but immediately drops them whenever threatened. Besides a skeleton (not visible unless standing at the base of the tree and looking up, the trophies include a *long sword +2 flame blade*, a *gauntlet of ogre power* (only one), and a *helm of water breathing*. The skeleton and magical items came from the Ballastrian adventurers who fell prey to the aartuk. The missing magical gauntlet is somewhere on the island (see random encounter #6).

One of the Ballastrian victims, a female warrior, lies in the thicket behind the hangman tree. The skin of this corpse is strangely translucent and shines with a slick wetness. Any physical examination reveals that the body bears several wounds and has the consistency of jelly. A PC with a successful Intelligence check sees some sort of movement underneath the translucent skin, as if something is moving inside the body. On the armor is a decorative pin displaying a coat of arms. A PC with a heraldry proficiency may recognize it as one of the noble houses of Ballastri.

When the aartuk ambushed the Ballastri adventurers, they killed all the warriors and rogues and captured two spellcasters. They gave two of the corpses and both spellcasters to the syllix. Another corpse went to the hangman tree. The aartuk infected the final body with a virus that jellies the flesh and serves as a host for an aartuk embryo. The embryo is presently growing within the corpse and emerges in another three weeks.

The urns around the hangman tree contain aartuk ashes (aartuk cremate their dead). Two urns contain magical items: a *torque of protection +2* (owned by a previous elder and has the same effects as the torque owned by the present elder) and a *rod of security*.

The last area of interest is a syllix sortie hole (see random encounter #6), located behind the hangman tree. This one has an unlocked lid that lifts easily.



Underground Encounters

Eventually the PCs should find a sortie-hole and go below. Passages that lead below are rounded, smooth, and four feet in diameter. Passages connecting the chambers are about 10 feet in diameter, and living areas are about 12' high unless stated differently. All passages have a coating of the same pinkish, crystalline substance found on the walls of the sortie-holes. (See "Surface Encounters," area **3**, for description), and the place smells like burnt bacon. Unless otherwise noted, all syllix have the same statistics as those in random encounter #3.

1. Meeting Hall. This enormous chamber is 30' high and serves as a place for syllix to eat, train, worship, and plan. In one area are wheeled, wooden mock-ups of a galleon and a hammership spelljamming vessel. The syllix use them to train in boarding techniques.

Twenty syllix are here practicing swordsmanship with wooden swords. Once aroused, they pull out real swords and attack fearlessly. A battle in this cavern does not alert the syllix in area **2**.

2. Living Chambers. Each of these chambers accommodates up to 100 syllix, but thus far only one chamber is occupied. The chamber walls have crystalline peg-like protrusions six feet from the floor. When syllix rest, they wrap their tails around the pegs and hang upside down with their heads lying flat on the floor.

Chamber **2a** holds fifty sleeping syllix and ten awake ones. Sleeping syllix make loud purring sounds that should cover the PCs approach. (Thieves receive a +20% bonus to their move silently rolls.) When aroused by the PCs, awakened syllix need a full round to arm themselves.

Chambers **2b–2e** are unoccupied, as the syllix from these chambers are out in Wildspace on the base's spelljamming vessels, trying to capture more ships.

Chambers **2f** is also unoccupied, but the pinkish glow in here is brighter and stronger, and the smell is weaker. This area was recently dug out and covered with the crystalline slime excreted by the syllix. The covering is not yet dry and has a thick gelatinous consistency, although there is nothing to give this away except the changes in odor and hue. Clever PCs who poke the ground ahead of them also discover this. Any PC who wanders in sinks up to his ankles, ruining his footwear. Extricating oneself from the goo requires a Strength check. PCs who do not clean off the goo find their feet encased in a thin veneer of hardened crystal three turns later, imposing a –6 penalty to their Dexterity and –2 penalty to their movement rates. The only real way to get the stuff off is by using an alcohol-based substance. A PC with the herbalism proficiency or a background in alchemy can determine this.

The walls and floor in chamber **2g** are unfinished rock and dirt. Ten syllix are using long poles with sponge-like ends to coat the ceiling with a rosy colored liquid. They dip their poles into a large cauldron on wheels. There is practically no odor in here. This chamber is being prepared

for newly born syllix. First the umber hulks perform the necessary excavations, and then the syllix coat the ceiling. Once the ceilings are dry, the syllix coat the walls and floors.

In combat, four of the syllix pick up the cauldron and toss the contents at the closest PC. A successful attack vs. AC 10 (minus the PC's Dexterity and magical bonuses) results in the PC being coated with the liquid. Unless removed, the PC loses 1 point of Dexterity and his movement drops by 1 each hour as the liquid solidifies. After 12 hours, the PC is encased in a thin but solid crystalline veneer. The liquid has no effect on the syllix, as their skin repels it.

Chamber **2h** is a totally unfinished chamber, and it is dark. Once the syllix have finished chamber **2g**, they will start coating this area with their crystalline substance. PCs might use this as a place to rest and hide while underground, although if they have caused any commotion, the syllix search all underground areas thoroughly.

3. Growth Chamber. Four syllix guard this chamber. Once combat commences, one tries to run off for help. While in this chamber, all syllix attack with a +2 bonus to attack rolls as they are defending their "young."

In the chamber lie two other syllix bloated up to twice their normal thickness. These two consumed the adventurers handed over by the aartuk and, in another eight hours, will spawn two fully grown syllix. They cannot move but can shoot their loaded crossbows. PCs cannot rescue the former adventurers by hacking open the bloated syllix bodies; it is too late.

4. Viewing Portal. A winding tunnel leads to a small chamber with a 3' diameter bubble of thick glass that curves outward. The window is magically attuned to the control room (area **9**), affording the syllix various views of their base's underside. One is only 30 feet below the water's surface and, during daylight hours, the PCs can get a good underwater view. The rest are deep underwater and dark. Holding a light up to the glass entitles PCs to an Intelligence check; success indicates that the heroes can spot a fish wandering by outside. The glass may be broken by inflicting 50 hp damage from heavy weapons (vs. AC 3) or by a *shatter* spell, although doing so floods the underground areas quickly. Enormous water pressure blasts the PCs down the tunnels (3–18 hp damage) to the nearest large chamber. Three turns later, the syllix in area **9** detect that the island is sinking and lift the asteroid base out of the water, angle it so the water drains out, and then come looking for whatever caused the mishap.

5. Umber Hulk Chamber. Four umber hulks provide the syllix with the means to carve out new passages and tunnels in their underground lair. Their living area is dark and not covered with syllix crystalline formations. When the PCs come in here, the umber hulks attack hungrily since humankind is their favorite meat and they haven't gotten much lately (because of the syllix eruption cycle). If the umber hulks' morale breaks, they burrow through the stone walls, collapsing their escape tunnels behind them. If this occurs, use the surviving umber hulks as random encounters throughout the rest of the underground exploration (1-in-8 chance per hour of an umber hulk suddenly erupting from a wall or floor and attacking the PCs, although it is impossible for the umber hulk to surprise the PCs as it needs a one round to break through the crystalline covering).

Umber hulks (4): INT average; AL CE; AC 2; MV 6, Br 1–6; HD 8+8; hp 62, 59, 55, 51; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 3–12/3–12/1–10; SA confusion; SZ L; ML 13; XP 4,000; *MM*/352.

6. Purification Chamber. A complex system of mechanical pumps, pipes, and valves brings sea water in to a huge box-like metal container, separates the salt through some sort of internal heating process, and sends fresh water to the lake outside and to the docking berths (area **8**). Nearby is an enormous vat that collects the salt. It needs emptying every seven days. Four syllix tend this chamber and immediately attack intruders. Breaking an intake pipe (through a destructive spell) has the same results as opening the viewing portal (area **4**), although a kind DM might rule that the pipe is merely leaking and can give the PCs a few hours to figure out a way to plug it (e.g., a *mending* spell, or using the gnomes in area **7**) before it bursts open.

7. Forge.

> This area contains a forge, chimney, and tables and shelves covered with numerous tools and gadgets. Off in one corner are ingots of metal, lumber, barrels of nails, rope, and other supplies. In another corner are two small beds. Two small humanoids scurry around the forge, pounding on an anvil and chattering excitedly to each other. Four creatures, looking like a cross between a worm and a lizard and each armed with a crossbow, watch the two humanoids through lidless eyes. Two tunnels lead from this chamber, one appearing to go down while the other spirals upward into darkness.

The banging on the forge allows the PCs to surprise the syllix, although one tries to escape up to area **8**. The two small creatures are captive tinker gnomes named Gaterwondak and Sneezalot. The syllix captured them several years ago and use them as a slave maintenance crew. They forge metal weapons, do routine maintenance, repair the purification system (which they invented), and other miscellaneous chores. Each gnome carries a large iron ball and chain around his foot.

The gnomes greet the PCs with delighted chatter and relief at being freed. Unfortunately they only speak Gnomish and Syllix. A PC who speaks Gnomish has a 60% chance of understanding them, or PCs may speak with them through magical means. The gnomes can draw the PCs a rough map of the syllix lair interior if the PCs successfully communicate their desires.

The gnomes can also describe the nature of the syllix "goo" if the PCs haven't encountered it before. If the PCs have run into goo problems, the two gnomes have a barrel of dwarven ale, a panacea for PCs whose legs or bodies are stiffening with crystalline coverings.

Both gnomes are proficient blacksmiths and like to putter around making new things, although the

syllix keep guards down here to make sure the gnomes make nothing that could aid their escape. Their tables are filled with contraptions like bull-roarers that sound like mooing cows, hand-held gizmos made of interlocking wheels that emit sparks, a chess set with pieces that wind up and walk across the board (not necessarily according to the rules of chess), and other things that only tinker gnomes could think of.

Tinker gnomes (2): INT high; AL NG; AC 10; MV 6; HD 1; hp 6, 5; THAC0 19; Dmg by weapon type; SD +2 bonus to magic saving throws; SZ S; ML 8; *MM*/159; dagger, small hammer (Dmg 1–2).

8. Control Chamber. This chamber contains a strangely curved lounge-type chair in the center with an odd-looking helmet that hangs from an ominous black wire from the ceiling. Off to one side are five other similar chairs. In each chair is a syllix wearing another of the strangely shaped helms. These five creature's eyes are pasty white orbs with no pupils. Eight armed syllix guard this room, and they immediately attack any intruders.

On the second round of combat, five more syllix join the fray from the north (area **9**). On the third round of combat, three syllix bodyguards and the syllix lord attack from the western room (area **10**).

The syllix seated in the strange chairs are star-mages, a special breed of blind syllix that have the ability to fly the huge base from place to place. Their five chairs are syllixian major helms, and it takes all five star-mages to move the massive asteroid. During combat, the star-mages chatter excitedly but do not participate unless a PC gets close. If that happens, a syllix star-mage reaches out and tries to grab and strangle the PC with its tentacle-like fingers. The star-mages, although blind, have exceptionally good hearing and only suffer –2 penalties to their attack rolls.

Once combat is over, the PCs an explore the various devices and things in the room. The central chair and helmet are for the syllix lord and enable him to communicate instant telepathic commands to the star-mages. A non-syllix who dons a helm takes a terrible risk. Because the helms were designed for syllixian thought patterns and neurology, anyone else must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation, allowing any Wisdom bonuses. Success enables the wearer to function without harm as long as he keeps the helmet on and attached to the connecting cord. Interestingly, the wearer can now speak and read the Syllix language. Failure causes terrible brain damage (–2 to Intelligence, –2 to Wisdom, and –1 to Constitution) and has a 10% chance of causing insanity.

Around the wall are ten 3' wide glass portals, each one attuned to the viewing orbs (area **4**). Nine of them are dark (too deep underwater for light) while one (only 30' deep) shows an underwater scene (only if it is daytime when the PCs are in here).

At eight places around the wall are levers—four black and four white. The white levers open 5' × 5' portals looking to the north, south, east, and west. Looking out, the PCs can see that they are close to the very top of the mountain in the center of Revular's Island. The syllix open these portals when spelljamming through Wildspace. The black levers raise and lower the huge anchors of the ship.

Syllix warriors (8): INT average; AL LE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+1; hp 19 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1 (crossbow or short sword); Dmg 1–8 or by weapon type; SZ M (7' tall); ML 13; XP 175; see page 44.

Syllix bodyguards (3): Same statistics as above except they have AC 3; HD 4+1; hp 24 each; ML 15; XP 270; see page 44.

Syllix star-mages (4): Same statistics as the warriors except they have 15 hp each and do not fight with weapons.

Syllix lord: INT very; AL LE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 7+1; hp 52; THAC0 13; #AT 4; Dmg 2–7 (×4); SA weapon specialization (+1 to hit; +2 damage; 2/1 attacks per round per arm); SD *stoneskin* (see below); SZ M; ML 18; XP 4,000; see page 44 (syllix—variant).

The syllix lord wears gleaming chain mail (syllixian *chain mail* +2), and he wields two jagged cutlasses. Around his neck is a magical necklace that acts like a *stoneskin* spell once/day; it stops all damage the first three times the wearer is hit by melee weapons.

PCs who defeat the syllix lord find that the chain mail does not fit them but can be refashioned to their size for the mere price of 1,000 gp. (The gnomes might do it for free, but without supervision there is a 25% chance they get distracted and fashion it into something else, like a chain lariat or an odd-looking headpiece.)

9. Feeding Chamber. Two 2'-long star-mages and two humans recline in more of the lounge-type chairs. Clear flexible tubes of an unknown material protrude from the star-mages' heads and connect into the heads of the humans. A metallic box connects the tubes, and every few minutes the box hums and pinkish liquid seeps through the tubes from the humans into the star-mages.

The two humans are a mage and cleric who belonged to the Duke of Ballastri's adventuring party. The syllix use the brain enzymes of human and demihuman spellcasters to grow the star-mages, and these two victims moan in agony each time the metallic box hums.

Disconnecting the tubing is tricky. Simply yanking a tube out of a victim has a 90% chance of causing irreparable brain damage (Intelligence and Wisdom reduced to 1). A better option is to let a PC with a healing proficiency remove the tubes carefully. A successful check results in no further damage to the victim. A failure by 1, 2, or 3 results in the victim losing that many points of Intelligence and Wisdom (each), and a failure by more than this (or a natural 20 in any case) results in the victim losing all but one point of Intelligence and Wisdom. Rogue PCs can successfully remove the tubes using their remove traps skill, with a successful roll having no ill effects and an unsuccessful roll having a "vegetable" result. Once the tubes are disconnected, the young star-mages die.

When revived, the mage and cleric remember nothing after they were ambushed and have no spells available to help the PCs. They are grateful to the heroes, curse the Duke of Ballastri for sending them on this mission, and swear allegiance to Lungardy.

Rava (7th-level human wizard): AL N; AC 6; MV 12; W7; hp 11 (22 at full); THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by

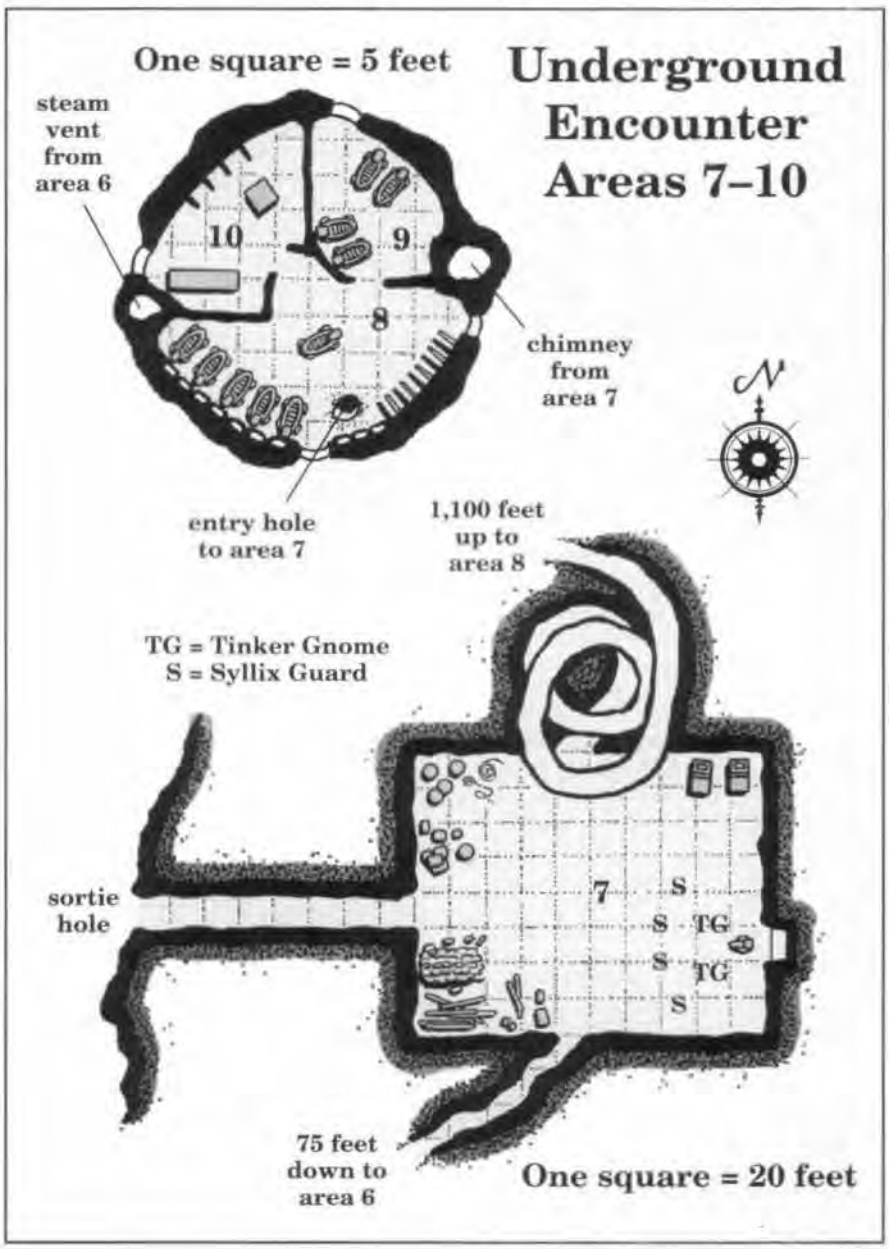
weapon type; S 9, D 15, C 11, I 14 (formerly 17), W 9 (formerly 12), Ch 10; ML 11; XP 1,000 (for rescue only); bracers of defense AC 7.

Toren (6th-level human priest): AL NG; AC 4; MV 12; P6; hp 19 (35 at full); THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 9, C 12, I 9 (formerly 12), W 15 (formerly 18), Ch 15; ML 12; XP 1,000 (for rescue only); *scale mail +2*.

10. Syllix Lords Chamber. This room has four pegs in the wall for the syllix lord and his bodyguards to use while sleeping. A 4'-high slanted table stands in the middle of the room, and on it are several metal sheets bound together. Next to the sheets is a sharp, pointed instrument of a different metal. In the corner stands a 10' × 3' × 2' coffin-like metal box with a single hole in its center. Hanging on walls are four tapestries depicting syllix triumphs in Wildspace.

The bound metal sheets are the ship's logbook written in strange runes on the various pages. A rogue can decipher it after several hours of work using his read languages ability, but at half his normal chance. The book can be deciphered using appropriate spells or by someone brave enough to read it while wearing one of the helmets in area **9**. The book reveals the various wanderings of the syllix, their history with their island base, and their latest victims. The last passage rejoices at the upcoming eruption and details the exact time and specific coordinates in Wildspace where they are supposed to rendezvous with their companions. The PCs, of course, should have no clue as to where these coordinates are, nor do they understand the syllixian method of keeping time. What is important for the PCs to realize is that the syllix currently in Wildspace will come looking for their island base.

Concealed between the leaves of the book is a pointed instrument—the key to the chest. Using something else (like the sharp metal thing on the desk, a knitting needle, or a stiletto blade) results in 8–48 hp electrical damage. A PC using some form of insulation like thick gloves suffers half damage from the shock. Putting any non-metallic object into the hole does not trigger the trap, nor does it open the box.



Inside the box is the syllix treasury: 411 pp, 3,244 gp, 283 ep, and 1,233 sp along with 20 gems (values 3 × 2,000 gp, 5 × 1,000 gp, 4 × 800 gp, 8 × 500 gp) and five pieces of jewelry (values 2,500 gp, 3 × 1500 gp, and 400 gp). There are also seven magical items: a clerical scroll of *raise dead*, a *wand of lightning* (30 charges), a *dagger +2*, a *footman's mace +3*, a *chime of opening* (15 uses remaining), a cursed *shield –3*, and a spell book.

The spell book, mace, and wand belong to the NPCs. The NPCs will want their things back, but the NPC mage might allow PC wizards to copy spells from her book in gratitude for saving her life. (The DM should determine what spells are in the mage's book). Finally, the tapestries in this chamber qualify as art objects, each worth 400 gp.

Concluding the Adventure

Wiping out the evil races on Revular's Island earns the PCs a story award of 20,000 XP in addition to experience

earned through combat and other bonuses. Additionally, King Stephanos keeps his word by appointing them as a governing council and financing a colony with a startup grant of 3,000 gold pieces.

Claiming the island as a base of operations for future adventures is a huge reward that opens the door for roleplaying challenges and future adventures. To colonize the place, the PCs need to recruit followers, and that proves difficult given the wild stories of what happened to the first colonists. The PCs should have to roleplay their recruiting efforts, and no one wants to go unless the PCs offer recruiting bonuses or other incentives.

Another challenge is that the ecology of Revular's Island is disrupted. Once the aartuk and syllix are wiped out, the hoo-hah birds and pigalopes have no predators. Unchecked breeding leads to an eruption of pigalopes and hoo-hah birds. The pigalopes not only eat the underbrush, but also grub into the ground to eat the roots of the trees, eventually killing them (and depriving the base of its oxygenation source). Transplanting trees elsewhere does not work; they only grow in the unique soil found on the island. Too many hoo-hah birds also endanger the trees. They destroy insects, which are necessary for pollination, and worms, which add nutrients to the unique soil.

A solution is to introduce new predators. Capturing wolves, cheetahs, or other carnivores will keep the pigalopes in check. Bird-eating constrictor snakes keep the hoo-hah population down. Some PCs might get the bright idea of hunting and exporting pigalope meat, but to do this requires some way of preserving it. Solutions include constructing a smokehouse or using the salt from the water purification system from the spelljamming base's interior. Any PC who thinks of this should receive a 500 XP bonus. Captured hoo-hah chicks can be trained by PCs with the animal training proficiency to give different alert cries for up to five different types of foes. Without training, they cause a ruckus whenever any humanoid comes within their sight, and thus they usually make annoying pets.

Assuming the PCs handle the animal problems, they also have to be sensitive to over-harvesting the trees. A PC with a forester secondary skill or a druid can determine that only 100 trees per year may be harvested, but the PCs must replant the area with seedlings and keep them protected from pigalopes, which love young saplings. An offshoot of this problem is that to maintain constant harvesting of 100 trees per year, no ground is available for other agriculture, thus requiring the PCs to import fruit, vegetables, grain, etc.

Finally, the iron ore is rich and may be mined, giving the PCs a net monthly income of 50 gp per month, although there is a 1% chance (cumulative) every three months that the ore will be exhausted. It takes 1,000 gp to start mining plus the PCs have to recruit miners.

Of course, neighboring countries may not care for a Lungardian colony having the corner on such precious commodities and might send an expedition to conquer it. The most obvious candidate for doing this is the Duke of Ballastri, who probably wonders what happened to the adventurers he sent there.

The biggest problem is that many of the syllix were not on Revular's Island when the PCs got there. Out in Wildspace, they have been capturing spelljamming ships to accommodate the new syllix from the eruption. The syllix were supposed to rendezvous in three years, the normal growth period for the star-mages. When the syllix reach the rendez-vous point and their spelljamming base isn't there, it is a solid bet that they come looking for it and the PCs. Ω

Nodwick
by Aaron Williams
SCORE!! WE DEFEATED THE SYLLIX, CRUSHED THE AARTUK, AND CAPTURED THIS TOTALLY COOL ISLAND-SHIP! I FEEL GREAT!
I'M KING OF THE WORLD! WOO-HOOOOO!!
AHOY!
WHO THE HECK ARE THEY, ARTAX?
THE NAME READS "S.S. JAMES CAMERON"
HEAVE-TO AND PREPARE TO BE SUED!
A BUNCH OF WELL-DRESSED PEOPLE WANT TO COMPLAIN ABOUT SOMEONE NAMED "JACK."
KEBERG! RIGHT AHEAD!

Aartuk

	Warrior	Elder
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any temperate or tropical land	
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Tribe	Tribe
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Omnivore	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8–10)	High (13–14)
TREASURE:	Q (I)	W (I)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil	Lawful evil
NO. APPEARING:	10–100	1 per tribe
ARMOR CLASS:	6	5 (6)
MOVEMENT:	6	6
HIT DICE:	2+1	5+1
THAC0:	19	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–8	5–30
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil	Spells
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to plant-based and *polymorph* spells (elders only)	
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)	L (8' tall)
MORALE:	Steady (11–12)	Elite (13–14)
XP VALUE:	120	3,000

The aartuk are nomadic plant creatures organized into small tribes, each led by an elder. They have star-shaped bodies covered with thick, flexible bark that resembles spiked leather. An aartuk moves on three of its five branches, and it has one snake-like stalk that coils in and out of the central stump.

Aartuk have a wide variety of coloration, but in each case it blends into their natural environment (80% chance of remaining concealed if the viewer is 30 or more feet away). Aartuk detect movement via vibration, smell, and infravision, but they cannot see visible light.

Combat: Aartuk attack in one of two ways: 1) spitting a rock-hard pellet from their head stalk for 1d8 hp damage; or 2) entangling a victim with a 30' tongue. Victims may only avoid the entanglement with a successful Dexterity check, or by a successful Strength check in later rounds (–1 penalty per round after the first). Entangled victims are pulled to the center of the aartuk's body where it is crushed by the creature's branches (1d8 hp damage per round).

Elder aartuks shoot fire seeds up to 60 feet away, inflicting 5d6 hp damage. They also cast spells as 4th level priests. In addition to these powers, elder aartuk are immune to spells or magical effects that are plant-based or alter their physical shapes (e.g., *polymorph other*).

Because aartuk have no innate spelljamming ability (not even elders), they normally avoid harming opponents who demonstrate helming abilities. Their goal is to capture such opponents and enslave them for such uses. Some aartuk, however, have allied themselves with other creatures who have spelljamming abilities, such as the syllix. In this case, the aartuk serve as worthy mercenaries.

Aartuk are sworn enemies of beholders, as they believe the eye tyrants conquered their home planet generations ago. Against beholders and their kin, aartuk have a +1 bonus to attack and saving throws.

Habitat/Society: Aartuk live and die for war, which is linked to their religion. They prefer worthy, strong opponents and have been known to let captured opponents (except slave pilots) go once they discover more worthy adversaries.

Aartuk need air and are capable of speech, but non-elders speak only their own strange tongue—a mixture of rustles, snaps, clicks, pops, and whistles. The elder leads the tribe and provides clerical guidance for one specific deity, typically an evil god of war. The elder also oversees the "gift of birth" (see below). Aartuk burn their dead and keep the ashes in urns.

Ecology: Aartuk ingest any kind of nourishment, but they prefer to cook their food. They eat by absorbing food through an opening underneath their bodies.

Aartuk reproduction is particularly grisly: They place their tongue on an open wound of a victim for three rounds, infecting it with a virus. Ironically, they call this process the "gift of birth." Each day, the victim loses 1d6 points of Constitution until death occurs. Meanwhile the body turns into a jelly-like substance, hosting an embryo created from the virus. One month later, a fully grown aartuk warrior emerges from the jelly. If a victim can be saved before death occurs, the process might be halted by a *cure disease* spell. The victim must first make a system shock roll (based on his current Constitution) and if successful, he recovers lost Constitution points at a rate of one/day, although he loses one point permanently. If he fails his system shock roll, he dies instantly, although the aartuk embryo dies with him.

Syllix

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any temperate or tropical land
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Hive/platoon
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8–10)
TREASURE:	D
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING:	2–12 (4–48)
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	12 (6)
HIT DICE:	3+1
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–8 or by weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (7' long)
MORALE:	Elite (13) or Champion (15) during eruption phase
XP VALUE:	175

The syllix is a highly developed invertebrate, resembling a cross between a worm and a salamander. The syllix's body is segmented, tapering to a pointed tail and a worm-like head with a pair of wide, unblinking eyes. It has a long, forked tongue that is often slipping in and out of its mouth.

Unlike a worm, however, the syllix also has two pairs of limbs. These are rubbery, tentacle-like appendages. Each of the lower limbs ends in a flat pad. The upper limbs end in six smaller tentacles that, because of their boneless nature, are even more dextrous than fingers.

A syllix can move by crawling or slithering along the ground, or by walking upright on its two rear limbs. In the latter mode, its movement is reduced by half (6). When crawling, however, the syllix cannot use a weapon.

Syllix speak their own tongue. Some of them have learned the Common language, but their speech is very sibilant—unpleasant for most other creatures to hear. Also, their war-like nature is well known, so these creatures seldom take time to chit-chat with other races.

Combat: Syllix use a variety of weapons well. They are particularly fond of specially modified light crossbows and short swords. Syllix attack aggressively and make good use of terrain. They have a morale of 13. However, during outbreaks of the eruption (See "Habitat/Society" below), the morale of the syllix improves to 15.

Syllix are eager to capture prisoners when they engage in battle with other races. The fate of the prisoners is not known to creatures of other races, though it is rumored to be horrible beyond belief. The common belief is that syllix require enzymes from the living brains of intelligent creatures to breed the mage-stars (see "Habitat/Society") that they need for space travel. Prisoners are kept immobilized, but conscious and alive, for months, often in excruciating pain. During this time, their brains are literally sucked out of their skulls by a developing mage-star.

In space, the syllix employ vessels with spelljamming helms powered by mage-stars.

Habitat/Society: The syllix develop in a very small area, such as an asteroid or an island on a planet. They breed and feed until the population of their land, fleet, or asteroid reaches explosive proportions. Hermaphroditic, each syllix gives birth after it has eaten enough food. Eventually, the syllix start to give birth to a generation of blind, white young. These are called the mage-stars.

The mage-stars are syllix in every way, except that they are blind—and thus do not practice combat—and they have the innate ability to activate a spelljammer helm. When these mage-stars reach maturity (after about three years), the syllix suddenly go through the great convulsion their society, and the rest of the worlds, call the Eruption.

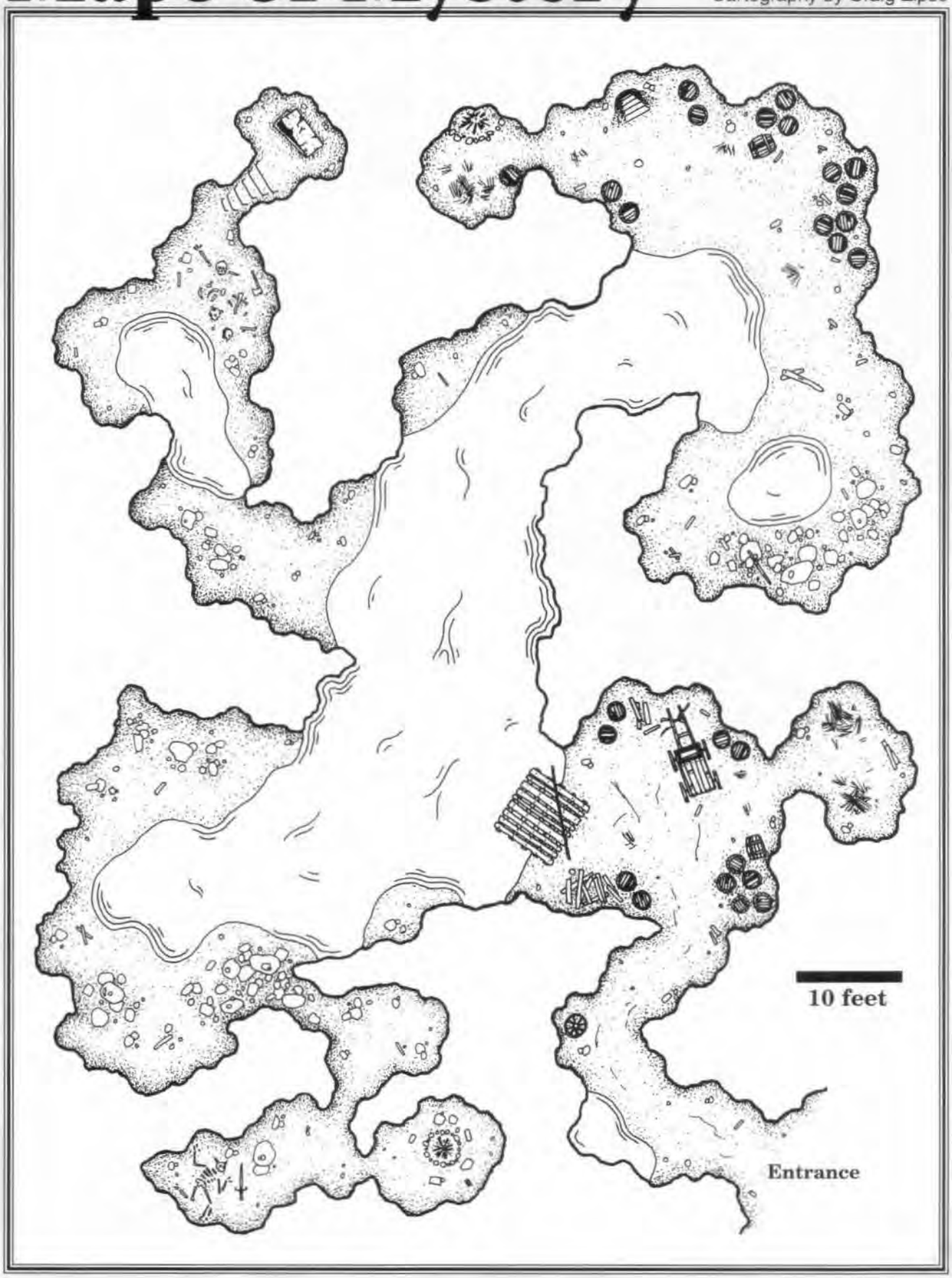
An erupting band of syllix has one mage-starred helm of SR 6, two of SR 5, three of SR 4, and so on through six of SR 1.

Guided by their mage-stars, the syllix break out of their homeworld and spread across space in an orgy of attacking, looting, and killing. No prisoners are taken when the syllix are in the midst of the eruption. Each individual attacks with a +1 bonus to all attack rolls. Their morale is increased to Champion level.

Ecology: The syllix is a meat-eating scavenger. It can live in most climates, but it prefers those that serve as habitat for a a lot of potential food. Many an island, asteroid, or small continent has been ravaged by a growing host of syllix during their breeding stage.

Maps of Mystery

Cartography by Craig Zipse



SIDE TREKS

BY STEVEN "STAN!" BROWN

Cartography by Chris Perkins

"How Do You Stop The Rhino From Charging?" is a MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Adventure Game SideTrek designed for any group of heroes. It takes place in downtown Manhattan, but Narrators can easily fit it into almost any setting. While the adventure offers an evening's worth of entertainment on its own, it is primarily designed to function as a distraction squeezed into the middle of an ongoing story.

Beginning the Adventure

Narrators should plan to spring this adventure on the heroes out of the blue. The action begins without warning, and the adventure has the greatest effect if the heroes begin either completely focused on some other urgent matter or are so relaxed that they never suspect anything could possibly be wrong. It can serve a double purpose if employed just as a villain is affecting a hasty escape. (Unlike in the comics, tenacious heroes often make it difficult or impossible for villains to escape to fight another day.) However, if Baron Zemo or the Taskmaster ducks around a corner with the heroes hot on his heels, this surprise twist of fate occupies the do-gooders long enough for the villain to make a getaway (only to reappear in an upcoming adventure).

You Round the Corner And ...

The adventure begins as the heroes round a corner, step out of a cab, or land on the curbside near Rockefeller Center (or thereabouts). This shift in location brings with it an almost surreal change in priorities. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

> Suddenly the ground begins to shake, and the entire world seems to turn gray. The only thing you can hear is a gruff voice shouting "Move it! Move it! Get outta the way!" as a hulking gray mass charges toward you at frightening speed. You've stepped right into the path of the Rhino—and he seems to have no interest at all in going anywhere but straight *through* you!

Have the first few heroes who round the corner attempt *average Agility (Agility)* actions to get out of the Rhino's way. The rest of the heroes should attempt *average Intellect* actions to see if they're quick enough to realize that walking around the corner (or whatever the location is) is a bad idea. Anyone who fails either action automatically becomes the victim of a successful attack by the charging villain's horn.

Once the momentary panic subsides, any heroes who make successful *easy Intellect* actions realize that the Rhino is not turning around to make another pass at them. He simply continues his pell-mell sprint—up the middle of a busy avenue, going against traffic and literally through any vehicle unable to veer out of his way. If this is not enough to get the heroes to intervene, the Narrator should describe a gridlocked commuter bus or a crosswalk full of pedestrians that falls immediately in the Rhino's path. The key is to get the heroes to drop everything in order to bring an end to this destructive rampage.

Rhino: Strength 17X, Intellect 2X, Agility 2X, Willpower 2X, Health 17, *Unbreakable* Body Armor +5 (total defense 22), Horns +5 (Impalement), Mask (Invulnerable to Spider-Man's webs). Calling: Greed. Hindrance: Bruiser (the Rhino attacks using Agility rather than Strength, though Strength is still used to calculate damage).

HOW DO YOU STOP THE RHINO FROM CHARGING?

Bringing Down the Rhino

Stopping the Rhino is easier said than done. He may not do much, but he's very good at running through things, and that's all that appears to be on his mind. He ignores the heroes (in fact, he'll ignore anyone and anything) unless they block his path. At that point he again shouts for them to move, but does nothing to change his course.

At first, attacking the Rhino is easy; he is so intent on his charge that he fails to notice anyone who is not directly in his way, and thus offers no opposition to any actions. Once the heroes cause him any wounds though (not a particularly easy task), he turns and shouts, "Leave me alone! I ain't done nothin' to you!" and continues his rampage.

The Rhino has no interest in getting involved in a fight with the heroes, avoiding or ignoring them if at all possible.

The heroes, on the other hand, should be very interested in stopping this maniac in his tracks. They will likely focus their attentions on either tripping, trapping, or simply knocking the Rhino out. Narrators should feel free to throw in imperiled bystanders every few blocks just to make sure the heroes pay attention to their surroundings (even though the Rhino has no such compunction).

Once the heroes cause 10 wounds to the Rhino, he stumbles and falls, giving the heroes time to surround him. Whether or not they choose to do this, read or paraphrase the following:

> When the Rhino looks up, his eyes are filled with annoyance and frustration rather than rage. "What's ya do *that* for? Geez! You're killin' me here!" Looking down at a stopwatch strapped to his wrist he groans, "I'm losin' time. I *know* he can't be that far behind!"

This might confuse the heroes. Allow them to pose their questions, but before the Rhino can answer, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

> You hear a flurry of car horns, squealing brakes, and at least four fenders being turned into chrome-plated pretzels. Above the dirge, you hear another surly voice yelling, "If you don't want to get hit, get outta my way!"
>
> Looking down the street, you glimpse the Juggernaut smashing in the hood of a taxi cab before running off uptown—also directly into the flow of oncoming traffic.
>
> "Ya gotta let me go," whines the Rhino. "He's in the lead now!"

Though he is anxious to start running again, the Rhino clues in the heroes on what's happening.

He was sitting in a hole-in-the-wall bar in Soho grumbling over his latest defeat (the Narrator may either recap the most recent appearance of the Rhino or make up a suitable tale of a robbery gone awry), when in walked Cain Marko—the Juggernaut. The two villains recognized one another instantly (quite easy in the Rhino's case since he seldom removes his suit) and sat down to share a drink and commiserate. A few drinks later, the commiseration turned into competition as an argument broke out over which of the villains was the toughest.

Arm wrestling didn't settle the matter. Though the Juggernaut is tougher, none of the tables were tough enough to last to the end of the contest, so they settled on an alternate contest. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

> "We decided to have a chicken-race. The first one to make it to Columbus Circle wins—but we have to run *into* traffic the whole way. I got ahead of him by goin' through Grand Central Station (that's always faster than goin' into the Theater District), but then you guys stuck your noses into the mix. Now lemme go, huh?"

Regardless of what the heroes say, the Rhino leaps to his feet and begins to run uptown. The Juggernaut is less than two blocks ahead.

As the race continues, the Narrator can complicate matters by introducing some unforeseen elements:

- The Rhino runs over a car, trapping the occupants and starting a small engine fire.
- A bystander, obviously a business man, demands the heroes clear the traffic jam the villains have created so he can get to his meeting. If the heroes ignore him, the Narrator can give the belligerent oaf enough political or economic clout to cause trouble for the heroes in the future.
- A purse snatcher, taking advantage of the mayhem, makes a grab. The heroes can easily chase the thief down, but the bruisers have more time to wreck stuff that way.
- The Juggernaut, barely in the lead and hoping to gain some time, slams into a truck delivering jugs of water to local businesses. The jugs burst from the back of the truck and start bouncing down the street.

continues on page 61

A priest of Helm summons an unlikely ally.

DREADFUL VESTIGES

BY STEVE JOHNSON

When the hunters become the haunted

Artwork by Terry Dykstra
Cartography by Diesel

This is Steve's third appearance in DUNGEON® Adventures. *The module's title refers to the revilers—horrible undead spirits spawned from Steve's wonderfully twisted imagination*

"Dreadful Vestiges" is an AD&D® adventure designed for 5–7 PCs of levels 4–7 (about 30 total levels), set in the Mere of Dead Men region of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. It is recommended that the party have at least two spellcasters, one of whom is a priest. A paladin, though not required, would also prove useful.

Before running the adventure, the DM should carefully review the information in the sidebar on page 50.

Adventure Background

Holk House was once a sanctuary for a coven of priests and druids of Eldath, goddess of peace, pools, springs, and druid groves. It was named in honor of the archdruid Tarken Holk, who once roamed the Mere keeping watch over the land. As his power grew, Tarken attracted many priestly followers willing to protect the wilderness from humanoid incursions. Long after Tarken passed away, his followers and their descendants continued his time-honored traditions and watched over the land. Eventually, the coven constructed the large, fortified house to provide shelter and hold councils. A secret vault was also built within it to protect several holy artifacts of the faith. These artifacts were rumored to possess healing powers and insight into Eldath's plane of existence. The priests and druids also kept many valuable books of lore and provided enlightenment to any who made the pilgrimage to the sanctuary with peace in their hearts.

When the mere slowly crept up on the grounds, horrible beasts began to haunt the wilderness. Attacks upon pilgrims by monstrosities from the swamp became frequent until Holk House was seldom visited and the priests alone kept residence there.

Worshipers of Myrkul, the Lord of Bones, had their own temple hidden deep in the Mere and resented the presence of the Eldath priests. One night, many years ago, a pack of evil spirits called revilers rose from the swamp, commanded to unlife by the

dark will of Myrkul, slipped into the sanctuary and corrupted the priests with their alignment-altering power. When they awoke, the priests set upon each other. The few survivors, saved by the grace of their goddess, fled into the mere, eluding its many monsters. The revilers remained in Holk House to drive away visitors, even after Myrkul's demise during the Time of Troubles. No records tell what fate befell Myrkul's temple, but the revilers of Holk House remain to this day—ghostly vestiges of Myrkul's lingering power.

The evil haunting Holk House eventually caught the attention of Varak Redshield, a priest of Helm and former adventuring companion of Sir Justin Melenikus (see sidebar on page 50). Varak took it upon himself to investigate Holk House. Of all the brave men of Varak's expedition, only he survived the journey through the perilous swamp to reach the house. (The rest of his retinue were slain or driven off by will o' wisps). He soon discovered that the house was occupied by evil spirits. Despite a valiant struggle, he was corrupted by the revilers. Turned to evil and deprived of his priestly magic, Varak concentrated on unlocking the secret lore contained within the sanctuary's library and braced for the arrival of adventurers sent at Sir Justin's behest to find and "rescue" him.

Varak's search yielded a *planar shard*—a crystal hidden away years ago by priests of Eldath. Varak used the *planar shard* to summon a hezrou tanar'ri and negotiated a mutually beneficial pact to seize control of the entire region. Varak and the hezrou approached a tribe of lizard men known as the Scaly Death. Varak proclaimed that the fiend was the avatar of Semuanya, god of the lizard men, and that he—Varak—was the god's chosen servant. The lizard men were awestruck, and they submitted to Varak's will immediately. They now patrol the swamp on his behalf, eliminating anyone attempting to reach Holk House.

Varak has since regained his spellcasting ability, only now his spells are afforded him by the evil god Cyric the Mad, also referred to as the Prince of Lies. For the last several nights, Cyric has spoken to Varak in dreams, claiming to be a manifestation of the dead god Myrkul. Varak now believes that Myrkul is alive and given him the power to conquer his enemies.

Meeting With Sir Justin

The PCs arrive at the ruins of Iniarv's Tower, where Justin and his henchmen have set up camp. Workers are busy refortifying the tower, while messengers and supply wagons from Waterdeep come and go. Sir Justin awaits the PCs in his maproom. Justin welcomes the PCs heartily and immediately begins to explain the situation, pointing to the location of the Holk House on a large, weathered map of the mere spread out upon an oaken table before him. Read the following at this time:

> "We believe that Holk House—once a sanctuary for benign priests of Eldath—now harbors creatures of darkness, and that a being of great power may be directing the attacks upon the High Road from within. A priestly comrade of mine, Varak Redshield, led a small expedition into the Mere, intent on ridding Holk House of evil. Two men returned with tales of the expedition party being separated by will o' wisps, and they claim that two of their comrades were devoured by a dragon that lurks beneath the mire. It has become clear that something must be done. You will have my personal gratitude if you are able to find and rescue any members of the missing expedition, including Varak. You will be richly rewarded should you succeed in destroying the Holk House menace, and you will also be doing a great service to both Waterdeep and Leilon. My friends, I wish you strength and speed!"

If the PCs are successful, Justin promises to give them a 5,000-gp writ which they may take to Waterdeep and exchange for real currency. They also have rights to all magical items and treasure they find in Holk House, save any holy artifacts of Eldath which Sir Justin has promised to the temple of Eldath.

Should the PCs have questions about the history of Holk House, Sir Justin gladly provides them with what details he can. He knows the general history and purpose of the Holk House when it was a sanctuary for priests of Eldath, but he does not know what specific creature or force of evil took it over. Likewise, he does not know that the house is possessed by revilers or that Varak has been tainted by their evil.

The PCs are provided with two four-man skiffs, since much of the area they must traverse is submerged. If the PCs should need to return to Iniarv's Tower for healing during the course of the adventure, Sir Justin's clerics, the Watchers, can provide them with curative magics (see sidebar on next page).

Journey Through the Mere

The Mere of Dead Men is a foreboding place. Twisted gray trees rise up through the misty, murky water, thick moss dangling from their drooping limbs. Dense, leafy surface vegetation covers the water in most places, sometimes so thick it forms small floating islands of tangled weeds. Where there is land solid enough to stand upon, the banks are steep and muddy. Sporadic showers of cold, drizzling rain are frequent. The most visible denizens of the mere include alligators, swarms of biting insects, hissing possums, ravens, and large scaly fish swimming lethargically just under the surface. Many terrible monsters lurk within the mere, such as will o' wisps, giant leeches, and fierce tribes of lizard men. Constantly on patrol, the lizard men are often mistaken for alligators with their eyes poking out of the water.

Visions in the Mystic Pool

The journey from Iniarv's Tower to Holk House is approximately 30 miles. Halfway through, the PCs come upon a scene of surreal, forbidding beauty:

> As you paddle through the twisted canals of the mere, the dense vegetation suddenly grows thinner, and you find yourselves gliding upon a mystic pool of mirror-like water with tendrils of writhing mist playing upon its surface, surrounded by emerald-green cattails and a circle of monolithic rocks glinting with chips of semi-precious stones. The

Series Overview

Edging along the eastern edge of the Mere is the High Road, a vital and well-traveled route linking Waterdeep to the northern town of Leilon and, north of that, the city of Luskan. Over the last several months, the High Road between Water-deep and Leilon has been threatened by monsters from the Mere. Caravans report brutal attacks by lizard men on catoblepas mounts, yuan-ti, gargantuan bullywugs, and will o' wisps. There have even been confirmed sightings of a huge black lizard skulking through the Mere. Sir Justin Melenikus, a Waterdhavian knight and paladin of Helm, has grown weary of these attacks and offered his services to the city. Sir Justin and his watchers (specialty priests of Helm) recently left Waterdeep and headed north, clearing bandits out of the ruins of the demilich Iniarv's tower (on the edge of the Mere) and turning the site into their encampment.

Melenikus and his watchers have garnered enthusiastic support from the Lords of Waterdeep, the city's Merchants' Guild, and the local Adventurers' Guild. In fact, a notice has been posted prominently in the Adventurers' Guildhall that reads:

"Sir Justin Melenikus, a renowned knight of Helm, needs brave and hearty adventurers to help slay monstrous threats from the dreaded Mere of Dead Men. Fell creatures have been attacking caravans on the High Road, slaughtering travelers, and endangering Waterdeep's trade with its northern neighbors. Unless the monsters are defeated, all trade to the north could be halted. Sir Justin and his watchers have made camp in the ruins of Iniarv's Tower, located four days' walk toward Leilon. Interested parties should meet with Sir Justin in person.

"Rewards for slain monsters shall be authorized by Sir Justin. Gold shall be paid by the Free Merchants' Guild upon presentation of a stamped writ from the knight himself."

A handful of adventurers have already left the city for Iniarv's Tower, a ruin located in the foothills east of the Mere. Sir Justin is sending several groups into the swamp to rout the monsters. This series explores several key sites where monsters are thought or known to dwell. Using *divination* spells, the watchers have determined that a great evil lurks in the Mere, and that the recent attacks on the High Road are somehow related.

Camp at Iniarv's Tower

When the heroes arrive at Iniarv's Tower, they are well met by Sir Justin. Each time he sends them into the Mere, he promises to reward them with a writ that they can keep and take back to Waterdeep to exchange for gold coins. The amount of the reward varies depending on the party's degree of success (determined by the DM). Sir Justin also offers the following benefits:

❖ Heroes who return to Iniarv's Tower during an adventure may receive any of the following curative magics from the Watchers: *cure light wounds* (up to 8/day), *cure serious wounds* (up to 4/day), *cure blindness or deafness* (up to 8/day), *cure disease* (up to 8/day), *neutralize poison* (up to 6/day), *raise dead* (up to 3/day).

❖ Before embarking on an expedition into the Mere, the characters receive the following items: three potions of *extra-healing* (or one potion of *healing* per PC), two clerical scrolls (*neutralize poison* and *cure disease*) in water-tight bone tubes, and a minor *ring of water breathing*. Each ring's magic lasts only 12 days from the time it is first worn, after which the ring loses its enchantment.

Sir Justin Melenikus (9th-level paladin of Helm): AL LG; AC 0; MV 12; Pa9; hp 73; THAC0 12 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SD detect evil intent (60' range); immune to disease; *cure disease* twice/week; heal 18 hp/day; S 16 (18/00 with *gauntlets of ogre power*), D 12, C 15, I 14, W 17, Ch 18; ML 18; *plate mail +3, Illuminus (two-handed sword +2, +4 vs. undead), gauntlets of ogre power.*

There are 12 watchers at Iniarv's Tower: two 11th-level priests, three 9th-level priests, three 7th-level priests, and four 5th-level priests. In addition to their healing spells, these priests carry various curative magics in the form of potions, scrolls, and other items they keep under guard. For more information on the watchers of Helm and their magic, consult the *Forgotten Realms Adventures* hardbound book or the *Faiths & Avatars* accessory.

In addition to the priests, Sir Justin has a dozen 4th-level fighters wearing plate mail and carrying *shields +1, long swords +1* and short bows with quivers of magical arrows (all provided by Sir Justin). They are stationed at the base camp to protect the watchers and guard the camp against attacks from the Mere.

surface of the pool barely produces a ripple despite the motion of the skiffs upon it.

The pool is roughly 60 feet in diameter and is 15 feet deep. The PCs still need to navigate through it using their skiffs, as there is no place shallow enough or firm enough to stand upon. The pool is separated from the rest of the swamp by thick tangles of fallen trees, dense underbrush, and sharp rocks jutting out of the water. The area cannot be avoided without adding an indeterminate amount of time to the PCs' journey, since they would have to backtrack to find a passable route. The pool radiates magic if detected for. The monolithic rocks tower at least 12 feet above the water and are far too steep to climb. If the PCs wish to inspect them, they must do so while remaining in their skiffs. The semi-precious stones can be chipped out of the rocks, but this requires several turns, and the total gained would be worth no more than 100 gp. The PCs eventually notice that as they stare into the water, each of them sees one of the following different visions:

❖ Two beautiful young women in gauzy black gowns lie sleeping upon a tattered pallet in an austere room of stone, dimly lit by a single flickering candle. Their skin is a sallow, pale white, and their breathing appears very shallow. (This is a vision of the penanggalan's quarters—area **17**).

❖ An underwater scene of skeletal, rotting corpses clutching rusted weapons. The water is murky, but hundreds of corpses can be seen lying intertwined on the muck-covered bottom. (This is a vision of the flooded grounds surrounding Holk House.)

❖ Two rows of white marble statues depicting saintly figures making gestures of reverence and supplication flank a pedestal of polished malachite upon which floats a red crystal shard. Encased within it is a twinkling star of dazzling silver light. (This is a vision of the vault of holy treasures—area **21**.)

❖ A shadowy chamber filled with foully polluted water which slowly drains away to reveal the skull of a monstrous dragon piled atop a heap of bones intermixed with coins, gems, jewelry, pieces of armor, and weapons. (This is a vision from the catacombs of a temple of Myrkul in the heart of the Mere of Dead Men. The meaning behind this vision is not unveiled until the fifth and final adventure in the *Mere of Dead Men* series.)

❖ The dark shadow of a new moon which slowly moves across the night

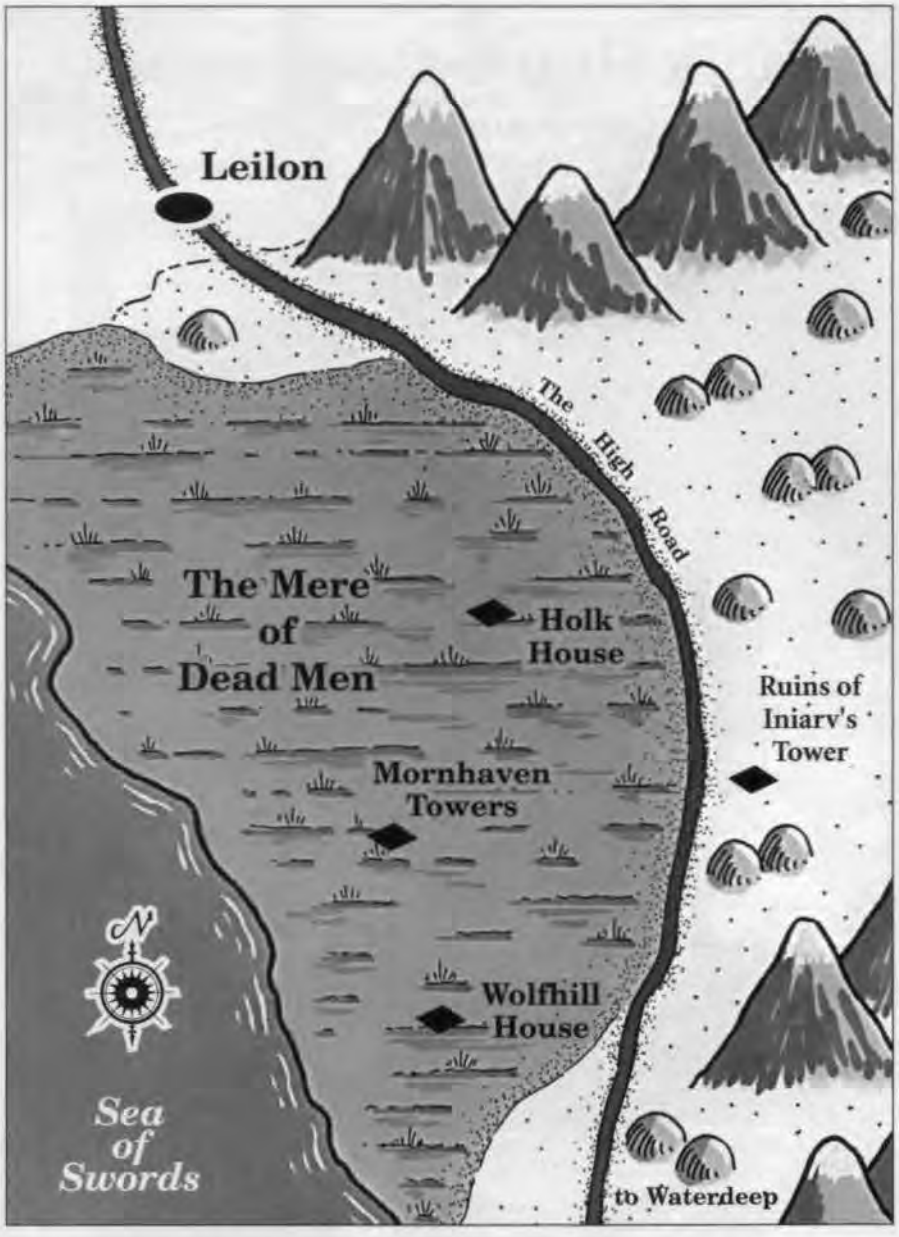
sky until it comes to rest in the center of a circle of seven stars. This is a vision of a rare astronomical event known in Faerûn as the Eye of Myrkul that will soon occur, for the first time since the Time of Troubles. The meaning behind this vision will be partially revealed in the fourth adventure of the *Mere of Dead Men* series and will be fully unveiled in the fifth and final chapter. A successful astrology or astronomy check will reveal that the Eye of Myrkul is a regular, if infrequent, astronomical event that is said to herald dark times in Faerûn when Myrkul's power waxes and the Moonmaiden's power wanes. A roll of a "1" on the check implies that the PC with the astrology proficiency realizes that this will be the first such reoccurrence of the event since the death of the Lord of Bones during the Avatar Crisis.

The PCs have discovered a magical pool that shows them visions of nearby places or events destined to occur in the future. The pool was once a sacred druid grove, but as the mere rose and became impure, the druids were forced to abandon the place. Lizard men of the Scaly Death tribe have moved in and believe the pool is sacred to their god, Semuanya. They do not tolerate trespassers and attack fiercely to defend their territory.

As the PCs search the pool and gaze upon its visions, a pair of lizard man warriors swim silently underneath one of their skiffs, preparing to capsize it before their hidden brothers launch an attack from the pool's edges. The PCs suffer a –3 penalty to their surprise roll. Success indicates that they spot the two lizard men under the murky water but does not reveal the presence of the lizard men along the pool's rim.

The two lizard men have a 50% chance of capsizing the skiff per round. Characters falling into the water wearing heavy armor must remove it or sink and risk drowning. (The DM should refer to the *PHB* for drowning rules.) Once this has occurred, the lizard men attack swimming PCs with their claws and teeth.

Simultaneously, the remaining seven lizard men lurking just under the water's surface at the pool's edges rise and attack any visible PCs with a hail of javelins. The lizard men are accompanied by a lizard king, who joins the fight only when it starts to go badly for his warriors.

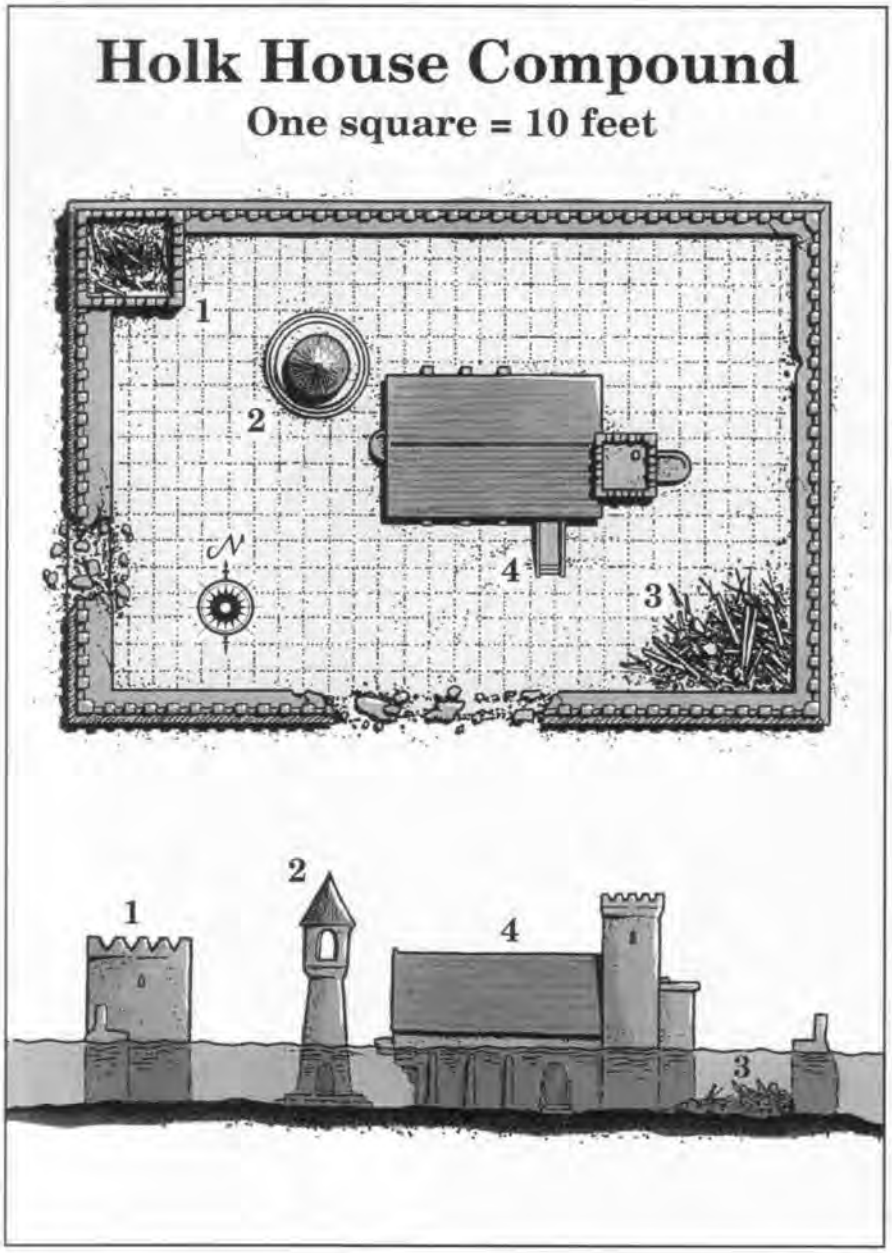


Lizard men (9): INT low (7); AL N; AC 4 (5 without shield); MV 6, Sw 12; HD 2+1; hp 17, 15, 13, 12, 10, 10, 9, 9, 8; THAC0 19; #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d6 or by weapon type; SZ M; ML 14; XP 65; *MM*/227; shield, spear, two javelins.

Lizard king (1): INT average (9); AL CE; AC 3; MV 9, Sw 15; HD 8; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 5d4; SA skewer on any attack roll 5 or more greater than the score needed to hit, causing double damage; SZ L; ML 16; XP 975; *MM*/227. The lizard king is armed with a great, barbed trident.

Ten rounds after the lizard men attack, a will o' wisp is drawn to the area. The wisp has no preference as far as attacking characters or lizard men. If the lizard men see the wisp coming (25% chance), they flee. The heroes are left to fend for themselves.

Will o' wisp: INT exceptional (15); AL CE; AC –8; MV Fl 18 (A); HD 9; hp 31; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 2d8; MR immune to spells save *protection from evil, magic missile,* and *maze*; SZ S; ML 17; XP 3,000; *MM*/361.



Once all the lizard men have been defeated, the PCs notice that the lizard king wears a strange totem necklace of smooth green stone. The necklace is carved to resemble an ornate throne upon which sits a hideous creature resembling a cross between a toad and a fish. The sides of the throne are carved with swamp scenes, alligators, and kneeling lizard men holding trays of treasure and sacrificial offerings. The PCs can judge by the lack of chips and nicks upon the necklace that it is relatively new. The necklace was carved by lizard man shamans to pay homage to Varak's summoned hezrou tanar'ri, which they believe is an avatar of their god. Varak has deliberately encouraged this belief among the lizard men; they follow his commands only because they believe he is a favored servant of the avatar.

The Scaly Death tribe is an ally of the Three Towers Tribe which is based near the sunken Mornhaven Towers. (See "Ssscaly Thingsss" in Issue #70 for more information on the Three Towers Tribe.) However, they have been reluctant to tell the other tribe of the avatar's appearance, as they believe they are the chosen ones of Semuanya and do not wish to share this glory.

Until Varak is ready to launch his attack upon Iniarv's Tower, he has ordered the lizard men to patrol the mere and kill any intruders. They have instructions not to kill human females, but are instead instructed to bring them to Holk House, where they are imprisoned. Varak tells the lizard men that these captives are offerings to the avatar. In reality, they are given to Bathshaera, a penanggalan who has made a bargain with Varak. She guards Holk House from intruders in return for a steady supply of victims.

Holk House

The land surrounding Holk House and the house itself are submerged in 25 feet of water, leaving only the steep roof and three towers visible. The 30' high battlemented walls that surround the house are speckled with clumps of thick moss. Sections of the west and south walls have crumbled into the mire, allowing easy passage into the compound to characters traveling by boat, raft, or skiff.

Groups of lizard men frequently patrol the submerged grounds of Holk House. They are fanatical about protecting what they believe to be the lair of Semuanya's avatar, and they attack intruders on sight. Four lizard men equipped with shields, spears, and javelins are stationed near the crumbled sections of the west and south walls, relying on the battlements to provide cover (–4 bonus to AC). PCs must make surprise rolls to spot these scaly sentinels. Three more lizard men and a shaman circle the house in a primitive wooden skiff. Two of these lizard men each use a long paddle to guide the skiff through the mire. The third warrior guards the shaman.

Lizard men (7): INT low (6); AL N; AC 4 (5 without shield); MV 6, Sw 12; HD 2+1; hp 15, 13, 12, 11, 11, 10, 9; THAC0 19; #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d6 or by weapon type; SZ M; ML 14; XP 65; *MM*/227; shield, spear, javelin.

Lizard man shaman (1): INT low (7); AL N; AC 4; MV 6, Sw 12; HD 3; hp 18; THAC0 19; #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d6 or by weapon type; SZ M; ML 14; XP 65; MM/227; shield, club. Spells: *shillelagh, faerie fire, obscurement*.

Underneath the dark, cloudy water, the bottom has turned to muck covered with tall, leafy weeds. The weeds have grown thick, reducing visibility and swimming rates by half. They also hide hundreds of human skeletons. These are remnants of a small army that was slaughtered by orc hordes many years ago. Many still wear rusted armor and clutch rusted weapons. Although they were buried long before the sanctuary was built, a pack of aquatic ghouls (lacedons) who lair within the house have been rooting them up. They lie in poses of intertwined agony, and teeth marks are evident on most of them if the bones are inspected closely. The scene is familiar to any PC who experienced a vision of it back at the mystic pool in the mere.

PCs swimming within the compound have a 10% (non-cumulative) chance per round of being attacked by a swarm of hideous leeches.

Leeches (100): INT non- (0); AL N; AC 10; MV Sw 1; HD special; hp area-effect attacks that inflict 10 hp damage or more destroys the swarm; THAC0 nil; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 per round from blood drain; SZ L (10' wide); ML 5; XP 15; *MM*/219.

DM Note: The entire compound has some strange magical wards. In many areas certain spells are completely negated, while in others they are greatly enhanced. The following spells do not work at all within the compound or the house itself: *dimension door, teleport, blink, phase door,* and *meld into stone*. The presence of the wards remains a mystery—one that Varak has failed to unravel.

Submerged in the Mere is the desolate and forlorn Holk House.

1. Dormitory. The largest of the towers, this once served as quarters for nearly all the priests who dwelled at the sanctuary. While the outer walls are still intact, the interior floors have crumbled. The lowest floor is completely submerged. Buried in and among the rubble are the skeletons of several priests who died fighting each other. There is nothing of value on or near their remains.

2. Bell Tower. The door to this tower is located on the southern side. Made of wood, it has been shattered and lies in pieces under the dark water. To explore the bell tower, the PCs must either swim down through the sunken doorway and then up the narrow, winding staircase until they reach the top (which is above water), or they must pull their skiff alongside and scale the outside of the tower. The top chamber is scarcely 8 feet in diameter and is mostly filled by a large rusted bell. This bell was once used to signal daily prayer times and to announce visitors to the sanctuary.

Strange, undecipherable runes have been painted in black along the bell's rim. They radiate conjuration/summoning magic if detected for. If

rung, the bell produces a loud clashing sound. Time and neglect have changed its once vibrant toll into a harsh, unpleasant tone. Ringing the bell doubles the duration of any conjuration/summoning spell cast within 1 turn. If the spell is used to actually summon a being from another plane, the caster's chance of success is doubled. This magical effect has a range out to one mile.

3. Stables. Nothing is left of the stables but a pile of submerged wooden beams and stone masonry. The pile is roughly 40' square and 8' high. It is dangerous to search here, as there is a 25% chance per round that it partially collapses and pins a character underneath it, inflicting 1d10 hp damage and trapping the PC under water until he escapes by making a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll or is rescued by his comrades. Any PCs who search the rubble find the skeletons of three priests, recognizable by the holy symbols of Eldath around their bony necks. These priests fled the house once the revilers arrived. However, they were slain when the revilers transformed their canteen of water into poison.

4. Main House. Holk House is constructed almost entirely of stone blocks save for the roof, which consists of heavy wooden beams and thick planks. The structure is partly submerged under 25 feet of swamp water. Stone buttresses flank the house on the north and south sides. On the west side is a balcony. The eastern side is occupied mostly by a large, square watch tower with another small, rounded balcony attached to it.

Entrance to Holk House was once gained by crossing an arched stone bridge on the south side that once stood above a sparkling stream, and then through a heavy, iron-studded door. Now that most of the house is submerged, the PCs have other options, such as entering the second floor doorway on the west side, just above the water line. However, the western balcony door leading to area **16** has swelled up and does not budge (–3 penalty to all Open Doors rolls). Furthermore, it has been ensorcelled by the revilers with a *wizard lock* spell cast at 10th-level of ability.

If the PCs detect for evil or magic, they find that the entire place radiates both. If paladins are present, they can detect evil intent as long as the revilers are in the house.

Though the roof is wooden and appears to be rotting, it is still very strong. It is also infested with dozens of rot grubs. Any PC touching the roof is subject to attack by 1d3 rot grubs per round.

Rot grubs: INT non- (0); AL N; AC 4; MV 1, Br 0; HD 1 hp; THAC0 nil; #AT 0; Dmg 0; SA burrow into exposed flesh, killing the victim in 1d3 turns; ML 5; XP 15; *MM*/364.

Should PCs attempt to break in through the roof or destroy it with spells, they are immediately attacked by three revilers that use their *suggestion* powers to drive away the PCs or turn them against one another. If the PCs are not dissuaded, the revilers reveal themselves and strike with their claws. PCs wearing *rings of Myrkul* recovered from earlier adventures (see sidebar on page 59) are not accosted by the revilers so long as they refrain from attacking them. Ring-wearing PCs who attack the revilers are fair game, however.

Revilers (3): INT high (13); AL CE; AC 2; MV Fl 30 (B); HD 4; hp 23, 20, 16; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6; SA spells, alter alignment by touch, poison liquids; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; MR 40%; SZ M; ML 12; XP 1,400; see page 60.

The DM should also remember that most of the lower level of the house is completely underwater (see areas **5–14**). PCs exploring these flooded chambers and corridors require some sort of *water breathing* as well as a light source that shines underwater.

DM's Note: When the revilers took the house for their lair, they warped and twisted many of its features and decorations into disturbing caricatures to make it more appropriate for a temple of Myrkul. PCs with the religion proficiency are entitled to a proficiency check to recognize the symbols and motifs of Myrkul throughout the interior.

5. Chamber of the Faithful. This chamber served as a waiting room for visitors and pilgrims. Now it is completely flooded. A low, circular stone well in the center once contained a pool of clear water. Upon the wall are slim pillars of marble reaching to the ceiling. Additionally, there are four small fountains in the chamber wall to the northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest. Each is a delicately carved representation of a fish, from whose mouth water would have poured into a basin. Now the fish have taken on an eerie, staring cast. As the PCs swim through this chamber, it seems like the fishes' eyes follow their every movement.

6. Statuary. These two alcoves are occupied by 9' tall marble statues of robed priests, their faces obscured by cowls. They once carried marble staves, but these have been twisted by the revilers into huge scythes. Although genuinely foreboding, the statues are inanimate and harmless.

7. Kitchen. This flooded chamber is a complete shambles. The wooden table and chairs are overturned and rotting, and metal utensils and pottery shards are littered everywhere. A rotted tapestry has fallen down from the western wall and partially drapes the floor. An alcove on the far eastern wall holds wine barrels that have split open. A doorway to the south leads to the pantry and storage room. It is empty save for a flooded crate and some barren shelves.

8. Anointing Hall. This room, used to anoint priests of the sanctuary, is not submerged in water, although the passageway leading to it certainly is. This magical air pocket might be the work of Eldath's priests or some ancient mythal cast upon this site, but it cannot be dispelled. There is a circular pool identical to the one in area **5** in the center of the western part of the hall. It is still filled with water, but the water has been rendered poisonous by the revilers (Type I poison). A *purify food & water* or *neutralize poison* spell purifies the water, making it drinkable.

The walls were once decorated with bright frescoes, but now the symbols of Eldath have been twisted into leering skulls. When the PCs enter the room, a reviler uses its *spectral force* spell to make the skulls to emit great howls, but they fall silent when someone enters the eastern portion of the hall.

Three steps lead up to the eastern half of the room where stands a marble pedestal upon which offerings to Eldath were laid. Small alcoves to the north and south were decorated with embossed stone trees and woodland scenes. These have been deliberately smashed, and many pieces of stone lie upon the floor. If any character comes within five feet of the pedestal, the reviler *animates* it and compels the pedestal to attack (–3 to the PC's surprise roll).

If the heroes try to enter area **9**, the reviler attacks with its corrupting touch and its claws. The reviler does not attack heroes wearing *rings of Myrkul* recovered from this or previous adventures in the Mere of Dead Men series (see sidebar on page 59), provided these PCs refrain from attacking it.

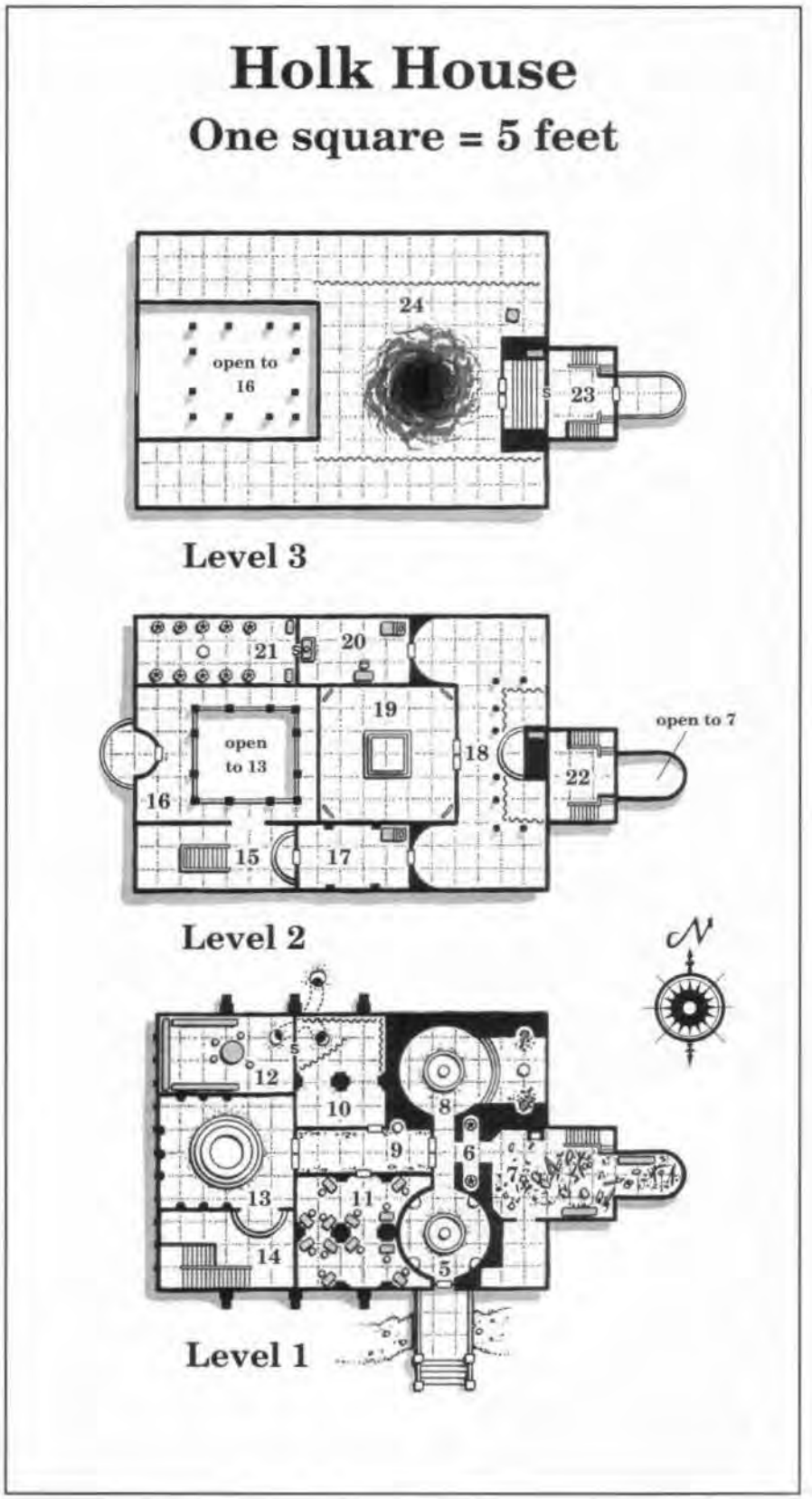
Reviler (1): hp 19; see area **4** for complete statistics.

Animated pedestal: INT non- (0); AL nil; AC 3; MV 3; HD 3; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SD immune to mind-affecting spells; half damage from edged/piercing weapons SZ M; ML 20; XP 65.

9. Hall of the Faithful. The two bronze double doors to the east are inscribed with illustrations of the rising and setting sun. The revilers have *wizard locked* them (at 10th-level of ability), and they can only be opened using a *knock* or *dispel magic* spell.

The flooding has severely damaged this area. The red carpet that once covered the floor here is torn and rotted. Bright frescoes on the north and south walls are chipped, and many of their pieces are strewn across the floor. In the round alcove is a green marble pedestal with a basin used for holding holy water. The bronze double doors to the west are slightly ajar.

10. Meditation Hall. The water is unusually cloudy here, reducing vision to five feet. This chamber is divided in two by archways. The southern half was devoted to prayers and contemplation. There are several iron candleholders in the southwest corner and a small folding shrine. The northern half was used exclusively for deep meditation. Bloated tapestries hang precariously from the walls, their thick draperies wavering sluggishly in the water. The western



tapestry's banister has come loose from the wall and is held only on one side. As a result, it has swung outward into the room slightly.

The secret door to the west is guarded by an electrical *glyph of warding* placed there by Varak. Any good-aligned being opening the door activates it, causing 8d4 hp damage to anything within 20 feet, as the electrical current is carried through the water (save for half damage).

The lacedons from area **12** have dug an entrance into this room. It is currently plugged with several inches of clay and is not visible due to the layer of silt and mud that covers most of the floor.

11. Scriptorium. The door to the flooded scriptorium is ajar. The room is divided into many smaller compartments by ornate, arched pillars similar to those in the meditation hall. Writing tables and scribe's instruments are clustered around each pillar, but little can be salvaged.

12. Library. Like the meditation hall (area **10**), visibility here is reduced to 10 feet due to the cloudy water. The library is now the den of five ghouls and a ghast who have dug a forked exit tunnel in the floor. One fork leads down and then up into the meditation hall, and the other exits just outside the northern wall of the house. The latter entrance is completely obscured by thick weeds and vegetation and should be treated as a secret door. The ghouls wait on the western side of the room until at least three PCs enter, pouncing on PCs unprotected by *rings of Myrkul*.

Bones and the grisly remains of the ghouls' recent meals lie heaped upon the floor. The ghouls' treasure is hidden among them: 135 pp, a *ring of shooting stars*, and a *scarab of protection*. The room contains a reading table, several stools, and three shelves of books that reach from the floor to the vaulted ceiling. Though small in comparison to other libraries, the books of Holk House were all extremely rare and valuable. As a consequence, no one but priests were allowed to enter this chamber or even know its location within the house. If a book was needed by a visitor, it was retrieved from the library by a priest. The visitor was permitted to read it in the scriptorium (see area **11**) or Hall of the Faithful (area **9**).

Flooding has destroyed 90% of the books in the library. However, a magical 2'-high air pocket exists near the 22'-high ceiling; many of the books stored on the very top shelves just above the waterline remain intact. Varak has taken the most noteworthy books from the library, but there are still many left that would be of great interest to clerics and mages. The books cover a wide variety of topics including ecology, druids, herbalism, alchemy, spellcraft, and metaphysics. The PCs find 2d4 books worth at least 300 gp each if recovered intact. There is also a *tome of clear thought* hidden in a secret compartment near the top of a bookcase.

Lacedon ghast: INT very (11); AL CE; AC 4; MV 15, Sw 18; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d8; SA stench, paralyzation; SD immune to *sleep* and *charm*; SZ M; ML 14; XP 650; *MM*/131.

Lacedon ghouls (5): INT low (6); AL CE; AC 6; MV 6, Sw 9; HD 2; hp 16, 14, 11, 11, 8; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6; SA paralyzation; SD immune to *sleep* and *charm*; SZ M; ML 12; XP 175; *MM*/131.

13. Chapel. This room contains an air pocket that does not flood when exposed to adjacent areas that *are* flooded. The air is stale and rank. The vaulted ceiling of the chapel reaches the full height of Holk House. White stone columns are set into the north, south, and west walls. The floor is tiled in intricate turquoise patterns, and the center of the chapel is dominated by a circular dais of green marble. The top of the dais is actually a 2' deep, bowl-like depression containing a 3' high spout of clear, drinkable water. A stained glass window high in the west wall allows a weak light to fall directly upon the fountain, illuminating it with a phantom light.

The fountain built over a natural spring. A 6"-diameter hole in the base of the bowl allows the spring water to emerge, while holes near the bowl's rim prevent overflow. However, when the PCs enter the room, an invisible reviler floating near the ceiling uses its *wizard lock* ability to seal the eastern doors. Next round, it uses its *stone shape* power to seal the holes in the fountain's rim. After one round, water begins spilling over the bowl's rim onto the floor. The fountain releases 25 cubic feet of water (a 5' × 5' × 1' volume) per round. If left unattended, the fountain fills this room and area **14** at a rate of one foot depth each hour. The water rises no higher than the ceiling of either chamber, eventually seeping out through cracks in the exterior walls.

If the PCs try to drink from the spring, the reviler transforms their drinking water into Type I poison. If *neutralize poison*, *cure disease*, or *purify food and water* is cast upon the fountain, any contaminated water is restored to its normal state. The reviler moans with rage and despair if this is done, retreating to area **14** without attacking the PCs directly.

Reviler (1): hp 14; see area **4** for complete statistics.

14. Staircase. Like area **13**, this chamber contains an air-pocket. The floor is a few feet lower than the floor of the adjacent chapel. The staircase leads up to the next level of the house. The walls here are sculpted with depictions of daily life at the sanctuary. However, the faces of the priests have been warped into skulls and horribly twisted visages.

If the reviler from area **13** fled to this chamber, it uses its powers to further harangue the PCs. When the PCs enter, the air fills with soft, eerie whisperings, and the eyes of the sculptures seem to follow their movements. The instant a PC sets foot upon the staircase, the nearest sculpture—a priest with the head of a horned fiend—turns, eyes blazing with a deep red light, and speaks, "Turn back, followers of light, lest this house of Myrkul swallow thee in everlasting darkness!" These effects are actually illusions created by the reviler's *spectral force* ability. Again, the reviler does not attack directly unless accosted by the PCs, choosing instead to harangue them until its presence is detected, at which point it joins the revilers in area **19**, passing through solid walls if necessary to escape the PCs' wrath.

15. Landing. This room is empty save for a staircase descending to area **14**, an open archway to area **16**, and an unlocked, iron-bound door leading to area **17**.

16. Chapel Balconies. This room contains a balcony that looks down 25 feet onto the chapel below. The balcony is surrounded by slim, fluted pillars and a stone railing. To the west is a door leading to an outside balcony. Water damage has caused it to swell in place, and it also has a *wizard lock* spell placed upon it, cast at 10th-level of ability.

17. Locked Room. This room is the lair of Bathshaera, a penanggalan. The iron-bound doors are always locked unless she is present. Inside, the room is lit only by a single gray candle. The same two women seen by the PCs in the mystic pool are here, sleeping upon a pallet in the northeast corner. Both have small puncture marks on their necks. They have been drugged by Varak and do not awaken unless administered an antidote prepared by a PC with the herbalism proficiency, or a *neutralize poison* spell is cast.

The women are sisters who were abducted from a caravan heading south to Waterdeep. Their names are Narshanna and Sythia Valagard. Although they are weak and disoriented, they remember being captured by lizard men while traveling the High Road. The lizard men brought them to Holk House where they were given to an evil man in armor. Varak forced them to drink a vile elixir, and after that they remember nothing.

Narshanna and **Sythia** (0-level humans): AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 8; XP 500 (for rescue only).

Female prisoners caught by the lizard men are brought here and given to Bathshaera, on Varak's orders. Bathshaera was once a thief traveling the High Road. She fell victim to a penanggalan that resides further north and, once drained of blood, rose from the dead as one herself. (This other penanggalan is fully described in the next installment of the *Mere of Dead Men* series).

For some time Bathshaera wandered the mere, preying on travelers until she found Holk House. There she encountered Varak and agreed to guard the house in exchange for a steady supply of victims.

During the day, Bathshaera hides within the mist in the Hall of Eldath (area **18**). However, if the PCs enter this room at night, they discover Bathshaera here in detached form feeding on her helpless victims. Bathshaera briefly attacks before fleeing out the eastern door, where she hides in the mist behind the northern set of tapestries.

The penanggalan does not attack PCs wearing *rings of Myrkul* (see sidebar) provided they do not attack her in turn.

Bathshaera (penanggalan): AL LE; AC 5 (8 for detached head); MV 12, head detached: Fl 18 (B); T3 (human form), HD 4 (head); hp 15 (body), 22 (head); THAC0 16; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d6 (bite), 1d4+7 (tail), or by weapon type; SA blood drain, detachment from body causes *feeblemind*; SD immune to *sleep, charm,* and *hold* spells; S 10, D 17, C 12, I 10, W 11, Ch 14; SZ M; ML 11; XP 1,400; *MC14*. Rogue skills: PP 30%, OL 40%, FRT 15%, MS 45%, HS 40%, DN 15%, CW 70%, RL 10%.

In human form, Bathshaera wields a *shortsword of quickness* +2 coated with contact poison (onset time 1d4 rounds; Dmg 15/0; good for one successful attack) and wears nonmagical leather armor.

Bathshaera typically flies about the mere at night, searching for prey. Once she has found potential victims, she waits until they are asleep and then uses her *hypnotism* ability on them (save at –3). Should the PCs decide to rest within the Holk House compound, Bathshaera chooses one PC as her victim (preferably a female) and attempts to *hypnotize* and drain that individual.

18. Hall of Eldath. This hall is decorated with twisted wilderness scenes. Graceful pillars have been transformed into hideous columns with skull-like protrusions. Thick, rotten tapestries flank a large altar to the east. The floor is shrouded in two feet of mist that pours out from under the doors to area **19**.

When detached, Bathshaera hides her body in the mist behind the northern set of tapestries. If the party has not already encountered her, she is lurking in human form there. If the PCs discover her, she pretends to be an escaped prisoner of Varak's and pleads for protection. If the PCs rest while in her company, Bathshaera attempts to *hypnotize* and drain one of the PCs while he or she sleeps. She prefers females with high Charisma scores over others.

If she remains undiscovered, Bathshaera uses her hide in shadows and move silently abilities to trail the party. She waits until an opportunity for a backstab presents itself, attacks, and then flees. She repeats this tactic as long as possible. If captured, she claims that she attacked the PCs because she believed they were agents of Varak. Bathshaera cares more about her own existence than anything else, offering information about Varak in exchange for her freedom.

19. Vault of the Sunblade. Roiling mist pours out from under the bronze double doors here. A steady roar as if from some great maelstrom can be heard coming from behind them. They are locked and secured with a heavy iron chain and padlock. A *knock* spell or 15 hp of bludgeoning damage opens the lock.

Inside, most of the room is filled with fog, except for the center. Sunk into the stone atop a square dais is a shining sword that radiates a bright light. Directly above the dais is a circular hole in the ceiling, filled with a vortex of dark clouds and mist. It is from this vortex that the roaring noise comes. Each corner of the room is occupied by a large mirror in a metal frame, in front of which are rows of lit candles, flickering fitfully. Three of the mirrors are non-magical, but the northeastern one is actually a *mirror of mental prowess*. Three revilers lurk in the corners of the room and use their claws to attack any PCs who enter here.

Revilers (3): hp 24, 20, 15; see area **4** for complete statistics.

Though Eldath is a goddess that promotes peace, the Holk House congregation included a paladin who guarded the priests and defended their faith. The sword in the dais is a *sunblade* called *Firestorm*, placed here for the paladin's use.

The revilers hate the sword and seek to destroy it, but it has the blessing of Eldath, and they cannot approach within 5 feet of it. Any good-aligned PC can remove the sword from the dais. Varak keeps the room locked when he is not using the *mirror of mental prowess* to scry on

the surrounding mere or the ruins of Iniarv's Tower.

Varak created the vortex using a *planar shard*, a magical crystal that opens *gates* to the Lower Planes. (See areas **21** and **24** for details.)

As soon as the PCs entered the house, Varak became aware of their presence via the *mirror of mental prowess* and immediately went to area **24** to call forth his tanar'ri ally. As seen from this chamber, the vortex is opaque and entirely fills the opening in the ceiling of the room, so the PCs cannot see into the next level of the house as they normally would. The vortex also prevents anything from passing through it, magical or otherwise.

20. Varak's Quarters. Once the quarters of the sanctuary's High Druid, Varak has now taken over this chamber. He has erected an altar to Myrkul—essentially a table covered with a black cloth positioned so that it blocks the secret door in the west all. Varak has covered the tablecloth with human skulls recovered from the house's sunken grounds.

In one corner, the PCs find a set of soaked clerical robes. Under them lies a holy symbol of Helm. When Varak was corrupted by the revilers, he discarded his priestly vestments, but only after braving the waters of the lower level in search of knowledge and treasure.

The large, mahogany desk is heaped with valuable books from the library, most of which deal with interplanar travel. Any wizard or priest of 8th level or higher who spends one month reading the books gains particular knowledge about the outer planes and summoning rituals used to call forth outer planar beings. There are six books total, worth 500 gp each to interested scholars. In a drawer of the desk are three clerical scrolls (*cure light wounds*, *remove curse*, and *neutralize poison* cast at 8th level) in sealed wooden tubes and a vial of potent poison that Varak used to drug the captive women in area **17**. The poison is ingestive and induces a deep catatonic sleep that lasts for 6d10 turns if a saving throw fails. Any PC with the herbalism proficiency who studies the poison can determine its true nature and prepare an antidote in 2d4 hours. If administered to the women, they regain consciousness within one turn.

The secret door to the west is inscribed with a *glyph of warding* that reduces the opener's Dexterity score to 3 for eight turns.

21. Vault of Holy Treasures. The floor here has been weakened by the lacedons in the chamber underneath (area **12**); the first PC who enters causes a 5' × 5' area to collapse. Unless the PC makes a successful Dexterity check at half, he falls through the hole and down into room below. The PC suffers no damage from falling into the water, but the ghouls gain one free round of attacks against the hapless prey.

The PCs might recognize this room as one they saw reflected in the mystic pool. The north and south walls are lined with white marble statues of saintly priests of Eldath, all of whom are making gestures of supplication and reverence to a pedestal of malachite in the center of the room. However, the red crystal (the *planar shard*) seen in the mystic pool vision is not present atop the pedestal. There are two chests in the room, each containing 1,500 gp as well as jeweled statuettes and ivory carvings symbolic of Eldath's religion.

This room was the sanctuary's vault. Here the priests of Eldath kept tithes, donations, and their holy treasures. Foremost among the latter was the *planar shard*, a magical crystal discovered and named by the priest of Eldath who found it many years ago. In the hands of a priest learned in the ways of the outer planes, the crystal can briefly open a *gate* to another plane. The priests of the sanctuary used the crystal to open gateways to Eldath's home plane, where they sought proxies of the goddess from whom they gained enlightenment and a better understanding of nature's ways. Fearing the item could be used for evil, the priests kept it locked within the vault whenever it was not used.

Varak discovered the *planar shard* in the house, and after studying the library's books on interplanar travel, he was able to use the crystal to open a *gate* to the Abyss. Now that the PCs have arrived to thwart his plans, Varak has retreated to the Gathering Chamber (area **24**) and called for aid from the tanar'ri.

22. Storage Room. This part of the watchtower is used only for storage of common supplies. The PCs find only a small amount of torches, rope, gardening tools, and other mundane items, all of which are in poor condition.

23. Watchtower Armory. What few weapons and armor the peace-loving clergy of the sanctuary kept for defense were stored here. There is a rack of maces, flails, scimitars, and morning stars between the supporting buttresses on the north wall, and a rack containing a suit of chain mail, scale mail, and plate mail to the south. All three suits have rusted due to neglect. The northern stairs go up to a hatch in the ceiling that leads to the top of the watchtower. The secret door to the west is protected with a *glyph of warding* that teleports any good-aligned PC who touches it to the watchtower (area **2**), saving throw applicable.

24. Gathering Chamber. The double doors to this chamber are barred from the inside and can withstand 75 hp damage before sundering. This chamber was used by the priests of Eldath as a secret meeting area. Varak cleared out all the furniture, cramming it into the narrow northern and southern hallways and leaving the chamber's ample space open for the *gate* to the Abyss.

Varak is waiting for the party behind the curtain next to his ritual brazier. He has just finished calling forth the hezrou tanar'ri.

When the PCs finally gain entry, read the following:

> A churning vortex of dark mist spins in the center of the chamber, roaring like a thunderstorm. From its black center climbs a horrid beast resembling a cross between and a monstrous toad and a fish, its powerful body covered with gleaming scales of mottled green. Sharp spines line its back, and its gaping mouth is filled with rows of snapping teeth. The creature emits a deafening roar that drowns out the sound of vortex and begins lurching forward, its eyes brimming with hatred.

When the vortex was first created and the hezrou first appeared, Varak asked the tanar'ri to appear before the lizard men and proclaim itself to be the avatar of their god, Semuanya. Posing as the hezrou's servant, Varak has used the lizard men to launch attacks against the High Road and to bring him treasure and captives for Bathshaera. News of Varak and "Semuanya's avatar" has spread throughout the lizard men tribes, and eventually Varak hopes he'll have enough minions to defeat Sir Justin's forces at Iniarv's Tower. Varak plans to lead the attack himself, accompanied by the hezrou.

Hezrou: INT average (8); AL CE; AC –6; MV 12; HD 9; hp 45; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/4d4; SA bearhug, stench, spell-like abilities; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; half damage from other non-magical attacks; never surprised; tanar'ri immunities; SZ L (7' tall); MR 70%; ML 17; XP 14,000; *PLANESCAPE® MC Appendix I*/102 (tanar'ri). Due to the house's lingering magical wards, the hezrou's ability to *blink* and *teleport without error* do not function.

Moments before the PCs enter this room, Varak imbibes a potion of *invisibility*. When the battle begins, he casts *resist fire, free action,* and *spell immunity* (vs. *magic missile*) upon himself. Varak waits until the tanar'ri has either been defeated or has seriously weakened the PCs before attacking. As he becomes visible, the PCs see an armored priest clutching the *planar shard* in one hand appear near the brazier. Varak uses *pyrotechnics* on the party's torches, if any, to blind them. He follows with *heat metal* on fighters and *silence 15' radius* on mages and clerics.

Breaking the *planar shard* in Varak's possession collapses the vortex instantly. The *planar shard* has no other function but to invoke and collapse the *gate*. A *shatter* spell destroys the crystal, as does any blunt attack inflicting 2 hp damage.

Varak Redshield (human priest of Cyric, former priest of Helm): AL CE (LG); AC 3; MV 9; C8; hp 40; THAC0 16 (13 with *mace +3*); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 15; S 15, D 14, C 14, I 15, W 16, Ch 11; ML 12; XP 5,000; plate mail, *ring of Myrkul* (see sidebar for details), *planar shard, footman's mace +3, helm of underwater action, staff of swarming insects* (14 charges), potion of *invisibility*, green tunic.

Spells (5/5/3/2): *cause fear, cause light wounds, command, faerie fire, protection from good; heat metal, hold person, produce flame, resist fire, silence 15' radius; dispel magic, pyrotechnics, repel insects; free action, spell immunity.*

Concluding the Adventure

Casting a *remove curse* on Varak restores his alignment to lawful good, whereupon he agrees to accompany the PCs back to Iniarv's Tower once the evil in Holk House has been eradicated. Varak knows how to collapse the vortex without destroying the *planar shard*, and his newfound faith in Helm gives him a +2 bonus to turn the revilers. Varak also helps the PCs subdue any party members who have succumbed to the alignment-altering power of the revilers.

Upon their return to Iniarv's Tower, the PCs are given a hearty welcome. Lord Justin gives them their writ and thanks them either for rescuing Varak or putting his troubled soul to rest. Lhammar Tamblyn, a priest of Eldath, also awaits the heroes' return and is pleased if the *planar shard*, the *sunblade*, and any other religious artifacts from Holk House are retrieved intact. If the PCs return the artifacts, offering them to Lhammar in an honorable fashion, the priest rewards them with the *sunblade* for the great service they have rendered.

The Scaly Death tribe of lizard men eventually investigate Holk House after the PCs have left and find no signs of the tanar'ri. They maintain a constant vigil at the site, awaiting the return of "Semuanya's avatar," and become too distracted waiting for signs of the avatar's return to launch attacks against the High Road or Iniarv's Tower.

For thwarting Varak's plans and driving the revilers from Holk House, each PC should receive a story award of 3,000 XP. If the PCs were granted the *sunblade*, an additional 1,500 XP should be given to each character. Ω

New Magical Item

Ring of Myrkul

The *rings of Myrkul*, relatively few in number, were created and worn by Myrkulyte priests before the Time of Troubles. When Myrkul perished atop Blackstaff Tower in Waterdeep, his secret temple in the heart of the Mere sank into the swamp. A number of Myrkulytes fled the sunken temple and died, giving up their lives—and their magical rings—to the monstrous denizens of the Mere.

The *rings of Myrkul*—gold bands painted black and adorned with the white skull symbol of Myrkul—glow faintly in the presence of a *detect evil* spell. The rings allowed the Myrkulytes to identify one another. More importantly, the rings served as keys, enabling the priests to enter their temple without incurring the wrath of many of its guardians.

Anyone wearing a *ring of Myrkul* is granted the ability to *walk among the dead*. All mindless undead and intelligent undead with fewer than 6 HD do not attack the ring's wearer unless the wearer attacks them first. Moreover, the wearer can cast *chill touch* spell 3/day and *ghoul touch* 1/day. Prior to the Time of Troubles, if the ring wearer was a Myrkulyte priest, he could invoke a number of other effects, but these greater necromantic powers vanished when Myrkul died.

Several *rings of Myrkul* lost in the swamp have since been found. Evil, intelligent creatures are drawn to the rings as if by the eighth-level *sympathy* spell (range 30 yards).

Varak, the villain in this adventure, wears a *ring of Myrkul* that he found while exploring the flooded grounds of Holk House. The importance of the ring becomes apparent in the last adventure in the *Mere of Dead Men* series.

XP Value: 250 **GP Value:** 1,000

Reviler

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Abandoned buildings, dungeons, and ruins
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Average to High (8–14)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Any evil

NO. APPEARING:	1–8
ARMOR CLASS:	2
MOVEMENT:	Fly 24 (B)
HIT DICE:	4
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–6/1–6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spells, alter alignment, poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+1 or better weapons to hit; see below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	40%
SIZE:	M (5' long)
MORALE:	Steady (12)
XP VALUE:	1,400

Revilers are undead spirits similar to haunts. They are created by evil gods for the purpose of spreading strife, woe, and terror. Revilers hate all things that are good and pure and seek to corrupt them, or at the very least twist their plans toward evil ends. Good beings turned to evil by the revilers' touch are used to sow discord and reap destruction.

Revilers are almost always invisible unless attempting to possess a victim, when they appear as ghostly, swooping shapes with leering skull faces and clawed, grasping limbs. Their presence is sometimes revealed by soft, eerie whisperings. A *detect undead*, *detect evil*, or *detect invisibility* spell reveals the revilers' presence. A *true seeing* spell reveals their true shape.

Revilers converse with one another in hollow whispers. They can speak any intelligent language they knew in life. Most revilers know the Common tongue.

Combat: Revilers can attack with two sharps claws, but they must turn visible to do so. They can also corrupt good or neutral victims by poisoning their minds. By giving up both wounding attacks, a reviler can alter the ethics of any living being it touches (requiring a successful attack roll). Any good-aligned being touched by a reviler must make a Wisdom check. If the roll fails, the victim's alignment is changed to that of the reviler until a *remove curse* or *dispel evil* is cast. A reviler may only attempt to "poison" a certain individual once. If the attempt fails, the victim is immune to any further attacks by that particular reviler.

Revilers also have the following spell-like abilities, cast at the 10th level of ability. Usable once/day: *animate object, suggestion, spectral force, stone shape*. Usable thrice/day: *detect good, detect magic, telekinesis, wizard lock*.

Revilers have the ability to *create poison* twice/day. Any liquid within 10 feet may be transformed into poison of Type I. The internal liquids of living creatures cannot be affected. A single reviler may affect up to 1 cubic foot of liquid, and several revilers often work together to poison water wells, drinking springs, ponds, or any other liquid likely to come in contact with good-aligned beings. Such transformed liquid remains poisonous for 2d6 hours. If *neutralize poison, cure disease,* or *purify food and drink* is cast upon the poisoned liquid, it reverts to normal.

Revilers remain invisible until they attack. They are also non-corporeal and can move through solid objects, although doing so costs them half their movement.

Revilers are immune to *sleep, charm, hold* and mind-influencing spells, as well as poison and paralyzation. They are turned as spectres. Holy water inflicts 1d8 hp damage per vial. *Holy word* and *dispel evil* spells banish them permanently. They require +1 or better weapons to hit.

Habitat/Society: Revilers inhabit abandoned buildings and ruins and are occasionally encountered in catacombs and cemeteries. As the servants of an evil deity, they are often confined to a specific location and cannot leave that location unless their master dictates otherwise. A typical reviler "haunt" can be anything from a single structure to an entire, forlorn domain. Revilers' lairs radiate strong emanations of evil and therefore tend to attract evil monsters, especially other forms of undead.

Ecology: Revilers are created from the souls of slain men and women of evil disposition. They seek freedom from their tormented state by serving the dark whims of their evil lord, but their undead existence only heightens the malevolence they possessed in life.

THE RHINO *(con'd from page 47)*

They are too small to stop the Rhino or the heroes but could do serious injury to a normal human.

And The Winner Is ...

The remainder of the adventure can take one of several forms.

❖ If the heroes decide to let the muscle-bound behemoths finish their race, the carnage increases. As the racers near the finish, they care less about property or personal damage and begin crashing through storefronts and restaurants to shave seconds off their times. The heroes should be civic-minded enough to at least make sure that the civilian population is kept out of harm's way, but if they need a gentle prodding, have a police officer approach the group and beg them to do something.

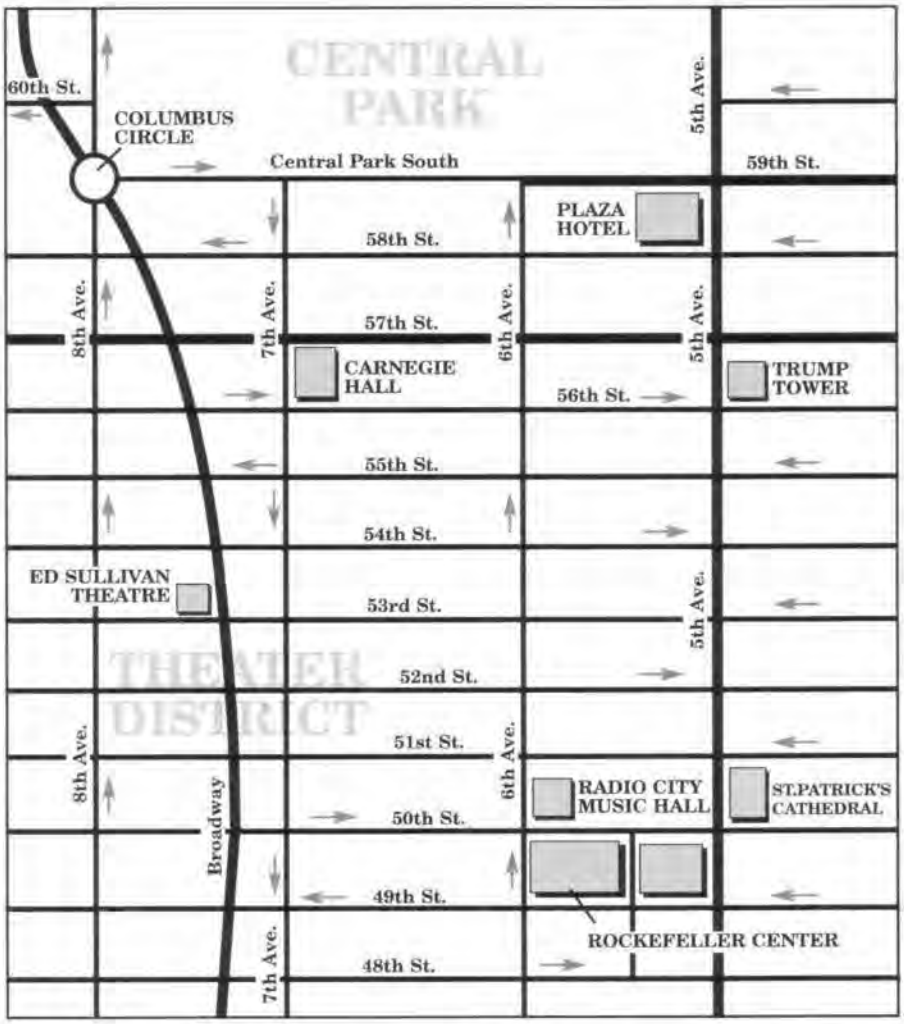
After the race, the two villains walk off like best buddies to find another bar in which to toast the results of their contest. They even talk about making the race an annual event.

❖ If the heroes try to stop the race, they must incapacitate both villains. Although the Rhino is probably hurt, the Juggernaut is at the peak of his powers. Narrators should improvise as many innocent bystanders or perilous situations as they like along the way (see above). In any case, both villains are more interested in winning the race than fighting the heroes, although that is not necessarily the case once the race is over.

Juggernaut: Strength 19D, Intellect 3X, Agility 2X, Willpower 4D, Health 25, Sonic Slam, Intimidation, Invulnerability to Disease, Life Support 15, Regeneration 5, Resistance (to Cold, Gasses, Poison, Energy) +7, Unstoppable (unique power, can't be stopped by anything), Body Armor +7 (total defense 26) with Resistance to Magic and Mental Control. Calling: Demolisher. Hindrance: Bruiser (the Juggernaut attacks using Agility rather than Strength, though Strength is still used to calculate damage).

❖ A more innovative solution would be for the heroes to mock the contestants or intimate that the heroes themselves could beat them both with ease. If one of the heroes succeeds at an *average Intellect (Willpower)* action, he or she wounds the villains' pride enough to stop them in their tracks. Both the Rhino and Juggernaut are competitive enough (and dumb enough, in the Rhino's case) to drop their little contest to start another one in which they can prove themselves tougher than any bunch of heroes.

Narrators should be open-minded and innovative, allowing heroes to control the situation without turning the villains into complete knuckleheads. They agree to take part in any contest that seems to test the participants' general toughness, since that was the original bone of contention.



Concluding the Adventure

Should the heroes stop either or both the Rhino and the Juggernaut, the NYPD arrives just in time to offer their profound thanks and take the unconscious bad guys into custody. If they let the villains get away, though, they are vilified in the pages of the next morning's Daily Bugle. Other outcomes might require Narrators to find a palatable middle ground between these positions.

If the heroes stopped the race (or at least prevented the villains from wrecking midtown Manhattan), the Narrator may reward them with a 1-point response bonus. Other suitable rewards can be substituted, particularly if they pertain to the storyline that the heroes were forced to abandon when they became embroiled in this adventure. Their original quarry might have gotten away (for now), but a clue, piece of equipment, or eyewitness discovered at the race's end could lead them back into the fray. Ω

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If this old house could speak, what tales of horror would it tell?

DARK MAGIC IN NEW ORLEANS

BY RANDY RICHARDS

Death on the bayou

Artwork by Bradley McDevitt
Cartography by Diesel

Randy grew up in "Where ya'at" Chalmette, a suburb of his birth city of New Orleans. Randy says, "We don't ride to work in swamp boats, nor do we have alligators in our yards."

"Dark Magic in New Orleans" is an AD&D® *Masque of the Red Death*™ adventure for 4–5 characters of levels 5–7 (about 25 total levels). The DM is encouraged to visit the local library and research 1890s New Orleans to get a "feel" for the setting. DMs planning to use this adventure in their regular RAVENLOFT® campaigns should review the "Adapting the Adventure" sidebar.

Adventure Background

Marie Laveau was the reigning queen of dark magic in New Orleans from the 1820s up until she passed the torch to her daughter, Marie Laveau II, in 1869. The mother Marie was scorned by her rivals, one of whom was a man known only as Doctor John. Although she could not destroy him, Marie used her magic to drive Doctor John from New Orleans. He soon reestablished his practices in a house on Bayou Saint John. His Voodan curse and charm practice thrived, but it never equaled that of the Laveau family. It was not until June 1881 that John was able to gain enough power to overcome Marie's defenses. The aging mystic was in her 70's when Doctor John sent an assassin imp to kill her where she slept.

Marie's daughter flew into a rage when she discovered the truth. For three years she plotted the death of Doctor John, and finally, on the anniversary of her mother's death in June 1884, she confronted him in a swampy graveyard near his home on Bayou Saint John. Doctor John cast a *polymorph* incantation on Marie, but the spell was reflected back, transforming him into an alligator. Doctor John fled into the swamp. Police investigated his disappearance, but without a body their efforts were fruitless. His house is currently being cared for by his grandson, Bébé Langlois (bay-bay lang-loy).

With the apparent death of Doctor John, much of the evil that plagued the New Orleans area disappeared. Recently, however, a series of strange deaths have occurred. Many attribute

the deaths to dark magic and whisper about the curse of Doctor John, but this cannot be substantiated. At first, the victims were poorer folk living in outlying areas of New Orleans, and these incidents were rarely investigated. Recently the terror has begun to touch people in high places, triggering more concern.

One of the more recent victims was a prominent businessman, Ernest Whitmarsh, found dead at his desk in his office at the Bank of Louisiana building. A dark magic fetish—a *mojo hand*—was found in his grasp. The police could not determine the cause of death, as there were no marks on his body.

The second unusual death was trapper Ron Gagliano, discovered badly mauled with his right arm missing completely. The man's rifle had been fired, and a dark magic *gris-gris* was found in his pocket.

Next, Senator Bill Broussard was traveling to Baton Rouge when his carriage was attacked. The driver, a Greek servant named Nick Psomas, flew into a mad rage, attacking rescuers when they arrived to help. He was killed in the ensuing fight, and the police believe the driver had succumbed to the pain and anguish of his situation. The perpetrators are still at large, presumably holding Senator Broussard for ransom; however, no demands have been received.

The final attack occurred just last week. The Baroness Pontalba's granddaughter, Contessa Pontalba—a wealthy, prominent New Orleans socialite—was being escorted home from a charity function when the horses of her carriage suddenly dropped dead on the spot. She was subsequently accosted by a group of men. Her escort, Bishop Scott Lemonier, confronted the gang. Upon witnessing the bishop, the bandits immediately turned and fled. However, one of them had apparently dropped a cursed item of dark magic, called a *wanga*.

Not satisfied with the skills of the local police, the Contessa hired a private investigator to delve into the case. Although a competent gumshoe, the detective suspects supernatural involvement and has sent for a group of experts to assist him in his work—experts known for solving "special" cases like this one.

Plot Synopsis

The PCs become involved in the adventure when private investigator Randy Boudreaux asks for assistance in solving a series of mysterious deaths in the New Orleans area. Voodan magical items have been found after each incident.

The adventurers arrive in New Orleans aboard the river boat *Mississippi Queen*. En route to the Saint Charles Hotel, they pass Congo Square, where dark magic dances are being performed before a large crowd. It is here they learn of the big Voodan gathering on Saint John's Eve and meet a reporter who works for the Picayune newspaper, a connection that could prove helpful.

At the crime scenes, the PCs discover that poison is the most direct cause of death in the murder cases. Boudreaux believes that Voodan magic may be indirectly responsible.

To learn more about dark magic, the characters visit a Voodan Queen, Marie Laveau. Here they learn more about her, the Voodan magic, and Doctor John's transformation into an alligator. Later that evening, the PCs explore Doctor John's house, and a diary is uncovered that reveals information about the stolen spirit of the first dark magic queen, Senité Dédé (sen-EE-tay DAY-day). From Senité's haunt, the PCs learn the whereabouts of Doctor John. She leads the group directly to Doctor John's new lair in the bayou. If they survive his undead minions, they discover that he has degenerated into a freakish alligator-man. If they defeat Doctor John, they have solved the murders and completed the adventure.

For the DM

Doctor John has resisted the complete polymorph into an alligator through the use of his dark magic. However, his efforts were not completely successful, and he is currently in a transitional hybrid state that has nearly driven him mad.

It took some time for the Doctor to regain his strength, but he has once again become a powerful adept. In his half-crazed condition, he has decided to exact vengeance on those who opposed him in the past.

Adapting the Adventure

"Dark Magic in New Orleans" can be transplanted from Gothic Earth into any regular AD&D RAVENLOFT campaign. The DM can place the adventure in any city with a coastline in a domain that parallels Renaissance culture, such as Port-a-Lucine in Dementlieu. (See the *Domains of Dread* sourcebook for details on this domain.) The DM can also place the adventure in his or her own RAVENLOFT domain, provided the cultural level is comparable to that of old New Orleans.

References to people, places, and events specific to the 1890s and New Orleans can be accommodated with a few minor changes. For instance, the French Opera House could easily become the Port-a-Lucine Opera House. Vistani magic can replace Voodan magic. References to Mark Twain and other figures from Earth history can be ignored or changed. If the campaign does not have governors and senators, replace them with dukes or vicars. For changes in currency, one cent equals one-tenth of a copper piece, and each dollar equals one silver piece.

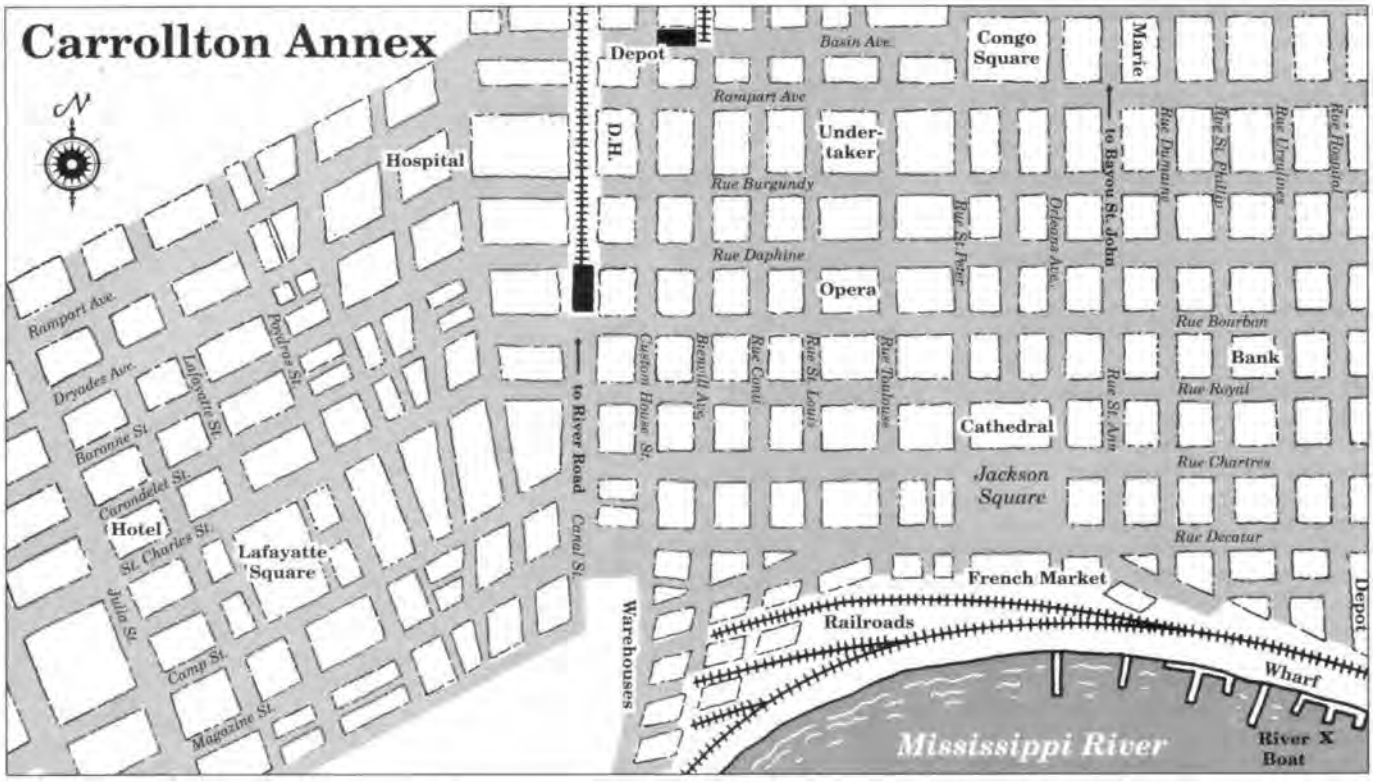
Ernest Whitmarsh was a loan examiner who turned down a loan to Doctor John; Senator Bill Broussard had attempted to enact several laws forbidding Voodan magic; Contessa Pontalba publicly ridiculed Doctor John in an interview published in the Daily Item newspaper; and Lisette De La Houssaye (Doctor John's next victim) was a relative of the mayor, who supported Senator Broussard's efforts in outlawing the magic.

John's ultimate goal is the total domination of the New Orleans area. The only person standing in his way is his arch-enemy, Marie Laveau. His plans are to kidnap her from the dark magic ceremony and use her spirit to power his foul magic.

Timeline

June 9: Doctor John's poisoned *mojo hand* kills Ernest Whitmarsh.

June 10: A normal alligator kills trapper Ron Gagliano.



June 12: Doctor John kidnaps Senator Bill Broussard and turns him into a juju zombie.

June 15: Contessa Pontalba is accosted by some of Doctor John's zombies.

June 17: Miss Pontalba hires investigator Randy Boudreaux.

June 18: Boudreaux contacts the PCs, inviting them to New Orleans.

June 21: The party arrives in New Orleans and is later witness to a dark magic ceremony.

June 22: The mayor's sister-in-law, Lisette De La Houssaye, is found hanged in Jackson Square.

June 23: Marie Laveau is kidnapped from the dark magic festival. PCs explore Doctor John's home. At midnight, Marie's spirit is sacrificed by Doctor John to increase his power, unless PCs intervene.

Sunday, June 21, 1893

Begin by reading the following as the characters approach New Orleans via the riverboat *Mississippi Queen*:

> Sunday, June 21, 1893. It has been several days' journey since you were contacted by a man with a strange accent, seeking help in solving some unusual murders. He would not elaborate, only to say the police seemed unable to solve the crimes. The pay of $700 plus expenses seemed exorbitant, but who are you to quibble?
>
> As you approach New Orleans, the Mississippi River traffic increases considerably. Before long, the river is flanked by a seemingly unending row of riverboats. As the ship's calliope plays a melancholy tune, you peer at the dockside bustle of a crowded port city. A clipper ship, the *Encounter*, passes you with a belly-full of cargo headed upstream to some northern state.
>
> The sun is setting in the distance, reflecting its orange glow off the rippling water. Beads of sweat drop from you brow. The heat is intense, and the dense humidity clings to you like a cloud of hungry mosquitos.
>
> As you near your docking berth, you notice a massive church dominating the skyline. A woman next to you refers to the towering structure as the Saint Louis Cathedral. Several hundred feet off the river front are rows of shops selling meat, fruits, and vegetables. Many people are gathered there.
>
> A man throws thick ropes to a dockworker who anchors the line to a post. A ramp is extended by several shipmates, allowing you to disembark. As you and the other passengers walk down the crowded ramp, you notice a man holding a sign with your names on it. This must be the chap who hired you.

Let the PCs decide what to do. If they approach the man, continue with the following text. If they do not contact the man, have him recognize them (perhaps by the way they are dressed). Note that the $700 pay is for the entire party. The limit on expenses (bribes, hotel, food, and so forth) is left up to the DM.

> "I'm Randy Boudreaux, private investigator. De Baroness Micaela Pontalba's granddaughter, Contessa Pontalba, has commissioned me to investigate several mysterious deaths in de New Orleans area. She's allowed me a great deal of expense money, so when I asked to

bring in outside help, chere said sure thing. I took da liberty of makin' arrangements for you to stay in de Saint Charles Hotel, if dat's okay. I'll explain de details of de case over dinner, but for now, allow me to give you a ride. De Baroness has been most generous in providing us wit transportation."

Randy motions to the characters to enter his horse-drawn carriage. The chauffeur takes their bags (unless they protest) and places them on the roof of the cab.

Randy Boudreaux (detective): AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; Tradesman 3; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 1 or 3/1 (rapid fire); Dmg by weapon type (2d6+1 with pistol); S 14, D 14, C 11, I 12, W 11, Ch 13; ML 12; army pistol.

To the Hotel

You swat at the horde of mosquitoes dancing about your head. The itch of their bite is maddening, and you realize they have been feasting on your blood all evening. You begin scratching the entire length of your body in an attempt to ease the discomfort.

Boudreaux laughs in a friendly manner, "Doan worry 'bout de mosquito bites. De're harmless enough."

You watch the scenery pass by your window. The street sign says "Rue St. Ann," and as you turn the corner, a new sign reads "Rampart Street." Up ahead, the avenue is blocked by a gathering of people.

"Driver!" Boudreaux yells. "What's de holdup?"

There is a pause as the driver jumps down from his seat. "It would seem the Voodan are holding their dark magic ceremony in Congo Square, sir. The street is completely blocked by onlookers."

Boudreaux turns to you and smiles. "Perhaps it's fate, no? I suspect de Voodan are involved wit dese murders. Let's get out and watch. Maybe if we ask questions, we can learn more about dem."

Since the PCs don't even know yet what they are investigating, they cannot ask many pertinent questions at this time. Everyone knows Marie Laveau is the reigning Voodan Queen—and that the Voodan practice dark magic—but they know little else. When the PCs decide to watch the ceremonies, read the following:

The crowd is curious but stands far back from the ceremony itself. In the center, the Voodans are chanting, beating their tam-tams, and dancing. Suddenly, the music and dancing stop. A beautiful woman wrapped in a 9' long snake and wearing a tan dress emerges. Her eyes are black, her figure is pronounced, and her skin shines in the torch light. When she reaches the center of the gathering, the tam-tams begin their rhythmic thumping. The limber woman begins an exotic dance, whirling and bowing, entwining the false snake about her body.

"Marie just does this for show," a tall brown-haired man says to you offhandedly. "The real party is on Saint John's Eve, this Tuesday. They throw a big dark magic festival up near Lake Pontchartrain, and the whole town shows up. This is just advertisement. Oh, by the way, I'm Larry Landry, reporter for the Daily Picayune newspaper here in town. You must be new here."

One of Landry's assignments has been coverage of Voodan events, and he has considerable knowledge in this area. Allow PCs to pump Landry for information about the Voodan and their dark magic. Knowing about their rituals only adds to the sense of mystery and danger. Landry can help the characters later, so they should meet him before they bed for the night. He can be reached at the newspaper office during normal business hours.

At 7:00 P.M., the ceremony ends and the crowd begins to break up. Boudreaux leads the PCs back to the carriage. Read the following:

As you climb into the cab, the driver commands the horses forward. You notice Marie Laveau staring directly at your carriage, as if she senses your presence. A cold chill runs down your spine.

The gas street lamps have been lit, and the city glows with an unnatural light. Gone is the festive atmosphere of the day, and now the sinister cloak of night has surrounded you. The driver turns onto Custom House Street, and finally onto Saint Charles Avenue.

The Saint Charles Hotel is magnificent to behold. The Romanesque architecture is typical in this area. Six thick white columns stand out from the main building, forming an overhang four stories high. The carriage comes to a complete stop in front of the structure. The bellhop quickly takes the PCs' luggage, and they are ushered into the grand building. Boudreaux gives them each a separate room key, all on the third floor. The bellhop motions for them to enter the lift and offhandedly remarks, "Please step in, and the lift operator will take you to your floor."

Dinner on Rue Decatur

Once the characters are settled in their rooms, Boudreaux invites them to dinner. He takes them to a new restaurant called Tujaque's (too-JAKS) at 823 Rue Decatur. The food is a simple selection of New Orleans favorites ranging from gumbo, jambalaya, crawfish boudin, French bread, and red beans with rice. The average meal is 50 cents.

During dinner, Boudreaux explains the events leading up to the party's arrival, as related in the "Adventure Background," and he answers any questions they have about the murders. He specifically points out the one connection between all the murders: the Voodan items and charms found on or near the dead bodies. Once Boudreaux has finished answering the characters' questions, he bids them goodnight and drops them off at their hotel. If asked, he tells them his address is the old Lalaurie house at the corner of Rue Royal and Hospital Street, where he is renting a room.

A Warning

When the PCs are sound asleep, regardless of the sleeping arrangements), one character (likely the least powerful, or the most timid), receives a special "gift." A loud rap at the door awakens the PCs.

When they go to the door and open it, they see a small dagger impaling a doll to the door. To the shock of the

party, the doll looks exactly like the character, right down to the clothing he or she wore today. There is no sign of who left the warning.

Monday, June 22, 1893

Boudreaux awakens the PCs the next morning around 7 A.M. If they are not yet ready, he busies himself in the lobby reading the Daily Picayune. If the PCs show him the doll from the previous night, Boudreaux claims the doll is meant to frighten the PCs. He asks the PCs which crime scene they wish to investigate first. The PCs must decide for themselves in what order to check out the locations. If the DM wishes to expedite play time, simply follow the events in the order given below:

Scene 1. Police Station.

The station is located in the Cabildo Building on Rue Decatur. The police chief is unavailable when the PCs arrive; however, the detective working on the case is Ben Bivona. He can give the PCs any information they need, although Boudreaux has already spoken to him. If they wish to examine the evidence in the cases, Bivona gives them permission. He can contact the coroner and have him meet the PCs. (See "The Undertaker" below.) Below is what Bivona knows about each of the murder victims:

Whitmarsh: Analysis of the *mojo charm* found in the corpse's hand reveals traces of poison (Type C).

Gagliano: The *gris-gris charm* found discovered in his pocket is a small cloth bag filled with dirt, ground vegetable matter, and snake bones. There are no toxic substances, and the charm is non-magical now. (The charm's magic lured Gagliano into the jaws of an alligator, but its magic has since been expended.)

Broussard: See Psomas below.

Psomas: A toxicological analysis of the *wanga charm* found near the carriage reveals no poisonous substances. The charm itself is made of a chicken bone, a hawk feather, and some white thread. It is a one-use magical item for throwing a curse on someone; it is no longer magical.

De La Houssaye: If her death has already occurred (see "Jackson Square"), the doll found near her body will be here with the other evidence. It contains no poison or other toxins and appears hand sewn. This fetish doll is used to inflict pain and death upon its likeness. This particular doll was intended to frighten and was never enspelled.

The party can contact Bivona at the station virtually anytime during his shift, which is usually from 6 A.M. to 2 P.M. He may be useful in making suggestions about where to investigate, or he might help those in need of a "push" in the right direction by giving clues he has "just uncovered."

Scene 2. The Undertaker.

The undertaker, Clarence Sneedly, works at 613 Toulouse Street.

The bodies of Whitmarsh, Gagliano, and Psomas are kept here while the murder investigation is pending. The possessions on their bodies at the time of death are being held as evidence at the police station. Sneedly helps the party any way he can. He is anxious to prepare the bodies for burial and get this business behind him. He is matter-of-fact in dealing with all aspects of this incident and knows nothing of the cases pending.

One of two coroners, Dr. Charles Seeman, is present the first time the characters arrive. He is not proficient in toxicology, but the other coroner, Dr. George Lawrason, is. If PCs suggest the cause of death is poison and have no toxicology proficiencies, do not penalize them. Instead, have Dr. Seeman suggest that Dr. Lawrason perform the necessary toxicologies.

Whitmarsh: If examined by a character proficient in toxicology, an insinuative poison is found in the victim's system—the same poison found on the *mojo-hand charm* at the police station.

Gagliano: A PC proficient in biology and zoology can determine that the cause of death was likely an alligator attack. Without the zoology proficiency, all that can be gleaned from the examination is that he was killed by a wild animal. Toxicology reveals no poisons in his system.

Broussard: His body was never found, so his condition is unknown.

Psomas: If the body is examined by a PC proficient in toxicology, an insinuative poison is found in his system. Several of his internal organs are missing: heart, liver, and spleen. A small dart, only a few millimeters long, can be found in the hairline. The tip contains a concentrated version of the same poison used to kill Whitmarsh (Type C). The poison is now inert.

De La Houssaye: If her death has already occurred, her body will be here. If examined by a PC proficient in toxicology, the same insinuative poison will be found in her system. Her neck is bruised but not broken, and regardless of any proficiencies, it is obvious to anyone that hanging can be ruled out as the cause of death.

Scene 3. Bank of Louisiana.

Ernest Whitmarsh, the murdered loan examiner, worked at the Bank of Louisiana, located at 409 Rue Royal.

The governor has assured the Bank of Louisiana there would be no more investigation. If the PCs try to examine the crime scene at this location, the secretary summons a bank representative, Frank Pellisier. Pellisier does not allow the PCs to enter and summons the guard if necessary. However, he is susceptible to bribes. If a PC makes a successful savior-faire proficiency check, Pellisier asks for $30, but he'll take $10. He requires that he remain with the PCs at all times. If the PCs agree to his terms, Pellisier guides them to Whitmarsh's second floor office.

The room is sparse, containing only a desk, typewriter, and file cabinet. The desk itself is empty.

If the files are searched or a criminology proficiency is used to scour the entire room, one file is found that piques the PCs' curiosity. An African-American man by the name of Doctor John, who has listed his profession as "Voodan King," was turned down for a loan by Whitmarsh. John's address is marked in the file. No other clues can be gleaned from the crime scene.

Scene 4. Gagliano Residence.

Ron Gagliano, the trapper, lived in this old and dilapidated shack on River Road. A child's stick-and-hoop toy lies on the porch, as do chairs, some buckets, and fishing equipment. Furs can be seen dangling from the porch overhang. A flat-bottomed boat is lying to one side of the building. As they approach the shack, the PCs

hear children playing inside.

An old oak tree behind the home carries a burden of Spanish moss from top to bottom.

The residence is located just outside the city limits near Cypress Swamp. Coincidentally, it is also about half a mile away from where the Senator was abducted.

Ron's widow, Denise, a care-worn woman in her late thirties, is attending her four children. The oldest boy, Thomas, answers the door. Thomas knows where the death took place and how the body was found, but he has kept the more gruesome details from his mother to lessen her grief.

If anyone specifically examines the ground where the death took place, they notice a faint blood trail leading off into the woods. If a character proficient in criminology canvasses the area, he locates it. Following the blood into the muddy swamp is the only way to find any more clues about this death.

If the trail is followed, a decomposing alligator is found. The bullet from Gagliano's rifle is lodged deep inside it; the man's arm is still clutched in the dead gator's jaws. There are no other clues at this location.

If the PCs need use of a boat, Denise rents her late husband's boat for $1 per day.

A grim warning foretells doom for one who opposes the Red Death.

Scene 5. Broussard's Carriage.

Senator Broussard's carriage was driven off of River Road, not too far from Ron Gagliano's residence.

Broussard was a firm supporter for banning the practice of Voodan. His enacted ordinances that created many restrictions for the Voodan practitioners. Doctor John saw him as an enemy and, in his deranged state, attacked the senator.

Before setting out, Boudreaux suggests purchasing special netted hats, obtained from the dry goods store D.H. Holmes on Canal Street for about $5 each. The hats will protect the PCs' heads from the swarms of mosquitos that occupy the swamp.

As they approach the accident location, a grim sight unfolds. About twenty feet from the road, submerged in about two feet of muddy water, is Broussard's overturned carriage. Two badly decomposed horses are still harnessed to the vehicle.

Even more peculiar are the several birds, snakes, turtles, and alligators that lie dead near the horses.

Hidden in the water surrounding the carriage is a living alligator. Any PC making a successful zoology proficiency check spots the gator.

If the PCs use a boat to reach the sunken carriage, the alligator is frightened off and leaves in search of easier prey. Once investigation of the vehicle begins, however, two water moccasins slither out of the reeds and attack anyone in the mire.

Alligator: AL N; AC 5; MV 6, Sw 12; HD 3; hp 14; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2d4 (jaws)/1d12 (tail); SA –2 to opponents' surprise rolls; SZ L; ML 9; XP 65; *MM*/49 (crocodile).

Water moccasins (2): AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 12, 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison (Type C); SZ S; ML 8; XP 175; *MM*/320 (snake, poisonous).

In their present state of decay, the horses cannot yield many clues. However, poison still exists in the animals' tissue; a toxicology reveals this fact. The toxin becomes inert once it is exposed to air, but the tissue of the horses is saturated with it. The numerous dead animals about the scene attest to the deadliness of this substance.

Scene 6. Meeting the Bishop.

The bishop, Scott Lemonier, can be reached at his office in the Presbytere facing Jackson Square. If questioned about the incident involving the bandits who attacked him, he relates the same story he gave to the police (see "Adventure Background"). However, he adds, "I felt divine intervention that night. God's hand helped turn those men away, for they gave no resistance." In game terms, the bishop "turned" the men, who were actually zombies. It was not a conscious effort on his part, however—simply his divine presence and strength of will.

Some PCs might wish to question the driver of the carriage that night. The bishop tells them that his driver quit after the first police interview, and the next day he was on a ship headed for New York. The driver had nothing to add to the bishop's story, only that he feared for his life.

If the PCs try to revisit the bishop at any later point during the game, he is away visiting other churches in Ecclesiastical Square on Constance Street. He might be at Saint Mary's Assumption or Saint Alphonsus (50% chance of either).

The bishop declines to accompany the PCs in their investigations, as that is "best left to the authorities."

Scene 7. The Pontalba Building.

The Pontalba Building faces Jackson Square. Miss Pontalba, the wealthy socialite and Boudreaux's employer, has a meeting with the board of directors of Tulane University to discuss donations to the school. This makes her unavailable; however, her servant has a written message for Detective Boudreaux. The letter reads as follows:

> *June 22, 1893*
>
> *Dear Mr. Boudreaux,*
>
> *You and your appointed investigators are invited to attend a performance at the French Opera House this evening. Afterward we will dine at Antoine's Restaurant at 713 Rue Saint Louis, where we will discuss your progress. The performance begins at 7:00 p.m., so please do not be late. Your tickets are enclosed.*
>
> *Miss Contessa Pontalba*

Scene 8. French Opera House.

This scene takes place at the French Opera House around 7:00 P.M. If the PCs lack formal attire, Randy Boudreaux provides them with some. If for some reason the PCs are late, they are denied entry until after the performance.

The exterior of the French Opera House is exquisite to behold. The white marble stonework reflects even the dull light of the gas lamps. The center door is flanked by two white external staircases, leading upward to the balcony level. All the seats are grouped four to a box, regardless of their position in the complex. Read the following once the PCs are seated comfortably:

> A beautiful woman, holding herself regally and dressed in white formal attire, enters the establishment. This must be Miss Pontalba, your employer, for all heads turn to her. She appears to be a woman in her mid-thirties. Her hair is red and flows down to her waist, where it touches the small of her back. Without acknowledging your presence, she sits down in the box next to yours, staring forward to the stage.
>
> A few moments later, the stage lights are turned up, and the performance begins.

Immediately following the performance, Miss Pontalba leaves the French Opera House, traveling directly to Antoine's Restaurant via her carriage, meeting the PCs there at 9:00 P.M.

Scene 9. Antoine's Restaurant.

The PCs should rendezvous with Contessa Pontalba at Antoine's, as arranged. When they enter the restaurant, read the following text:

> Antoine's is a lavish establishment. Miss Pontalba is already seated at the head of a long rectangular table, and she motions for you to join her. You are barely past the initial introductions when the waiters bring out your entrée. The specialty tonight is a Creole dish. The aroma is delightful.
>
> About thirty minutes into the meal, a man interrupts your hostess, handing her a note. After reading the message, she looks up grim-faced and says, "There's been another murder."

Miss Pontalba gives Boudreaux the note, at which time the meal breaks up. Boudreaux gathers the party together, and Contessa takes her leave. En route, Boudreaux explains that the body of a woman was found hanged from the equestrienne statue of Andrew Jackson in Jackson Square (the area in front of the Saint Louis Cathedral).

Scene 10. Jackson Square.

The PCs arrive in Jackson Square around 10:15 P.M., by which time a crowd has gathered. The police have already secured the crime scene. The body of a woman lies covered by a blanket. A hangman's noose dangles from the raised hoof of Andrew Jackson's rearing horse.

Boudreaux rushes to the scene and kneels beside the body, his face in his hands, sobbing uncontrollably.

Boudreaux shakes off any attempt to touch, move, or console him. If anyone is questioned, the PCs learn that the dead woman is Lisette De La Houssaye, the sister-in-law of mayor John Fitzpatrick, and beloved of Randy Boudreaux, the man who weeps now at her side. Boudreaux is of little use the rest of the investigation, but especially this evening.

After a few minutes at the investigation sight, the PCs are approached by Detective Bivona. He shows them a bit of unpublicized evidence he found when he arrived. Holding up a doll, he says, "This is the reason I sent for you. This Voodan doll." The doll—a perfect effigy of Lisette De La Houssaye—has a small noose around her neck.

There are no other clues at the crime scene. PCs may question some of the onlookers, but none of them witnessed the murder. Lisette was attacked by Doctor John and rendered unconscious with a *sleep* spell. She was taken to Jackson Square under the veil of an *invisibility* spell, poisoned, and then hanged.

Boudreaux accompanies Lisette's corpse to the morgue. PCs can accompany him or return to their hotel.

Tuesday, June 23, 1893

The events in Jackson Square have a profound effect on Detective Randy Boudreaux, as the death of his love proves too much to bear.

Early on this day, Boudreaux forwards a message to the party's hotel. The note is addressed to the PCs:

My friends,

I am terribly sorry, but due to the extenuating circumstances, I am unable to conclude the investigation with you. I have assured Miss Pontalba you are capable of continuing without me, perhaps even moreso. She will reimburse you for any reasonable expenses you incur, so long as you save the receipts. Her driver Gregory and the carriage are at your disposal and should be waiting outside.

I do have one final suggestion. The Voodan Queen Marie Laveau lives on Rue Saint Ann. She might be able to identify the charms we found, and perhaps she can sell you some protection. Good luck.

Randy Boudreaux

Scene 11. Meeting Marie Laveau.

PCs approaching Marie's house notice candles burning in the window. No sign marks this residence as a shop of magic, but hand-written letters on the door spell "Laveau." If the PCs knock on the door, a short woman of dark complexion answers. "I'm sorry," she says, "Marie sees no one today. Come back tomorrow."

Tonight is Saint John's Eve, the night of the dark magic festival, and Marie is preparing her incantations as host for the festivities. The servant, Antonina, has been instructed to turn away visitors. PCs who bribe the servant with at least $5 or request an audience to discuss their murder investigation are allowed inside.

The servant motions for you to enter. You follow her to an adjacent room, containing many strange decorations. Charms cover nearly every surface of the room, including the ceiling. Tribal masks are displayed above an altar. One entire wall is devoted to religious statues and jars of colored powder. Suddenly, you notice a striking woman standing in your midst. Her appearance startles you.

"You have need of my services?" she asks.

Marie is circumspect about most questions unless she is shown any of the charms or dolls. If she sees any of these, she recognizes the design, and a worried look washes over her previously stoic face as she gasps, "It is as I feared ... Doctor John is back from the dead!" At this point, she relates to the characters the information pertaining to her family as detailed in the "Adventure Background" section.

When the characters have been fully briefed of the Marie/John battle, Marie might suggest that the party check out Doctor John's home in Bayou Saint John. She knows that Doctor John's grandson, Bébé Langlois, looks after the property.

Marie sells the party any items they wish to purchase, but Marie only has enough ingredients on hand to make one of each item. She declines any invitation to accompany the PCs; she has commitments to the festival.

Most of the charms, powders, and potions were created by the Voodan priestess. Many of them are magical but work only once before losing their magic.

The $2 items are non-magical in nature.

Each $15 *gris-gris* item affords a one-shot bonus to any one ability score or statistic. The *gris-gris'* magic can be invoked once, after which the charm or potion loses its magic. Here are some possible *gris-gris* effects: attract the opposite sex (+1 bonus to next Charisma check), protection from spirits (–2 AC bonus against next attack by an undead creature), good health (+1 modifier to next Constitution check), luck (+1 modifier to next saving throw).

The $35 *mojo* items are as powerful as any normal magical item, but they only have enough magic for one use. Some possible *mojo* items include love oil (*philter of love*), controlling poudrés (potion of *human control*), *wanga* hex charms (–3 AC bonus for 24 hours), and *mojo hands* (+5 to saves vs. poison for 24 hours).

Marie Laveau (metaphysician): AL LN; AC 9 (5 with *gris-gris*); MV 12; Adept 14; hp 48; THAC0 12; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type or spell; S 9, I 15, W 17, D 10, C 16, Ch 18; ML 17; *Derringer pistol* +2, *gris-gris* bag (–4 AC bonus), rattle (casts *protection from evil 10' radius* once/day), *ouanga of spell turning* (as the ring).

Spells: *bless, cure light wounds* (×2), *detect magic* (×2), *invisibility to undead, purify food and drink; charm person or mammal, detect charm, messenger, slow poison, snake charm* (×2), *warp wood; animate dead, cure blindness or deafness, cure disease, feign death, negative plane protection, speak with dead* (×2); *cure serious wounds, detect lie, neutralize poison* (×2), *sticks to snakes; cure critical wounds* (×2), *magic font.*

Doctor John's Home

PCs can contact Detective Bivona at the police department and receive permission to investigate Dr. John's home. Bivona arranges for Mr. Bébé Langlois to meet the PCs at Doctor John's home by 7:00 P.M. to let them in. The PCs may instruct their driver, Gregory, to head for the Doctor's Bayou Saint John address. Gregory does not come closer than the foot bridge and drops the PCs off there.

As the characters approach the house, read this text:

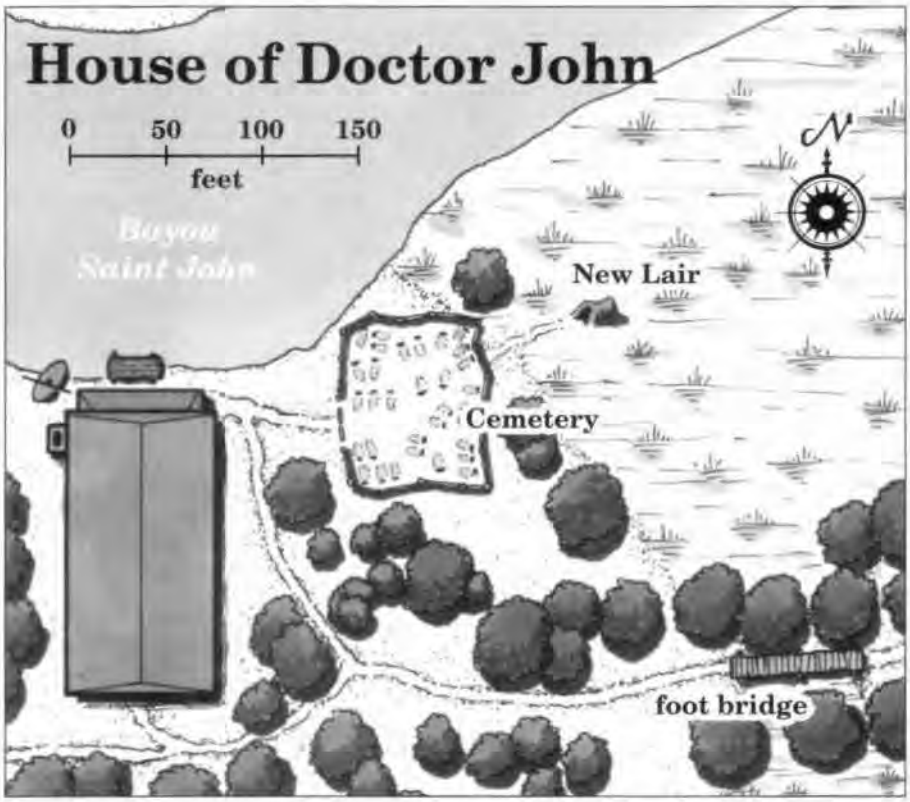
You cross a narrow footbridge, walking toward a dark, two-story house on the edge of the swampy demesne. The house, decrepit and old, has hidden itself behind trees and creeping vines.

A dock protrudes several feet into the nearby canal, and a boat rests on the shore.

If Bébé Langlois has been summoned, he arrives shortly after the PCs astride a galloping horse. Before he dismounts, he eyes the PCs warily. "Are you de investigation team?" he asks. If he's satisfied with the response, he takes a key out of his pocket and walks to the door.

Bébé Langlois knows nothing of his grandfather's practices. He comes by once a month to weed the lawn and trim the grass, but he won't enter the house. He is convinced that the place is cursed and haunted. After unlocking the door, he offers the PCs a warning:

"I don't know what makes you think you're so different than de others who have searched dis house. So far, none who's gone in has ever come out.



"Well, make sure you lock up if you leave."

The man hoists himself back up onto his horse. As he turns about, he smirks and says, "Give my regards to de other investigators if you see dem." He laughs loudly as he rides off.

Langlois knows nothing of the house interior.

The windows of the house have been protected by *glassteel* spells. The house itself is heavily protected by magic and cannot easily be destroyed. Weapons and fire have little effect beyond marring the surface, but magic or explosions might do some damage at the DM's discretion. Should Doctor John be killed, this protection disappears, rendering the house vulnerable to all attacks.

Ground Floor

1. Living Room. Hanging above the fireplace is a mirror nearly five feet on a side. The mantle itself holds two candle lamps, each made of finely worked obsidian in the shape of a woman with outstretched arms. A candle rests in each of her hands, but none of the candles are lit. Directly in front of the hearth is a blood-red cushioned seat resting firmly on an intricately sewn Oriental rug.

The near end of this immense room contains a red colored sofa and a matching love seat. A dark polished coffee table rests in front of these furniture pieces, three books resting on its surface.

The three books are *Life on the Mississippi* by Mark Twain, a music book with the cover song "Sea Serpent Polka" (and inside it another called "The Harp That Once Thro' Tara's Halls"), and a magazine called *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (January 1892).

A baby grand piano sits in the corner nearby. A piano bench is positioned here as well. Both the bench and the piano are magically trapped. The bench activates when someone sits down on it and faces the piano. As soon as this happens, two putrid green, warty, monstrous hands spring from the bench, grappling the individual to the seat. (A successful save vs. spell allows the PC to leap away in time.) The seat does not intentionally hurt anyone and can itself only be hurt by magical weapons (AC 6, hp 30). If the bench or the piano is severely damaged, the hands disappear. Almost immediately after being grappled, the victim feels compelled to play the piano. If others are standing in earshot, they must save vs. spell or begin crying, as they are moved by the haunting melody. The rendition lasts one turn, after which time the hands release the seated PC, enabling him to escape. The trap has no other effects. The power only works once/week and ceases to exist if Doctor John is slain.

A locked China cabinet near the kitchen entrance contains expensive dishware.

In one corner of the room rests a large dining table. Silverware and crystal glasses have been laid out, as if in expectation of guests. Amazingly, fresh fruit rests in a dish near the table's center. (The fresh-looking fruit in the bowl is safe to eat.) A breathtaking but dusty chandelier hangs above the dining table, its candles unlit. Plush red curtains cover all the windows. Next to one window is a chair and a desk, atop which rests an unlit oil lamp, some writing instruments, paper, and ink.

The desk contains several letters from family members that contain little information of importance. In the drawer can be found $4.35 in cash and change, along with the letters and a key to the China cabinet.

The dining area is home to a wayward shadow who has crept down from Doctor John's conjuring room due to the midnight cat's tampering with the protection circles there. The shadow attacks from its hiding place underneath the dining room table if anyone comes near.

Shadow: AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1; SA strength drain by touch; SD +1 or better weapons to hit; immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* and cold-based spells; SZ M; ML 19; XP 420; *MM*/312.

2. Kitchen. A countertop runs most of the length of two walls, connecting at a corner. The kitchen stove is a standard wood-burning stove, its vent pipe jutting through the wall near the ceiling. The large sink has a single faucet, probably connected to the

cistern on the roof. Boxes, bottles, and glass jars are scattered about the countertop. The cabinets and drawers contain mundane plates, pots, dishes, and eating utensils.

The icebox contains the essence of a creature from the Paraelemental Plane of Cold. The essence is harmless when contained. However, if Doctor John is slain, this essence is released. (For details, see "Concluding the Adventure.")

2a. Pantry. This pantry contains spices, rice, flour, sugar, salt, and other foodstuffs. Most of the produce is rotten. However, a supply of edible red beans are sealed in 12 glass *jars of preserving*. Handling any of the contents of this room may cause an attack by the rot grubs living here (25% chance).

Rot grubs (1d4): INT non-; AL N; AC 9; MV 1; HD 1 hp each; THAC0 nil; #AT 1; Dmg nil; SA infestation; SZ T; ML 5; XP 15; *MM*/364.

3. Hallway.

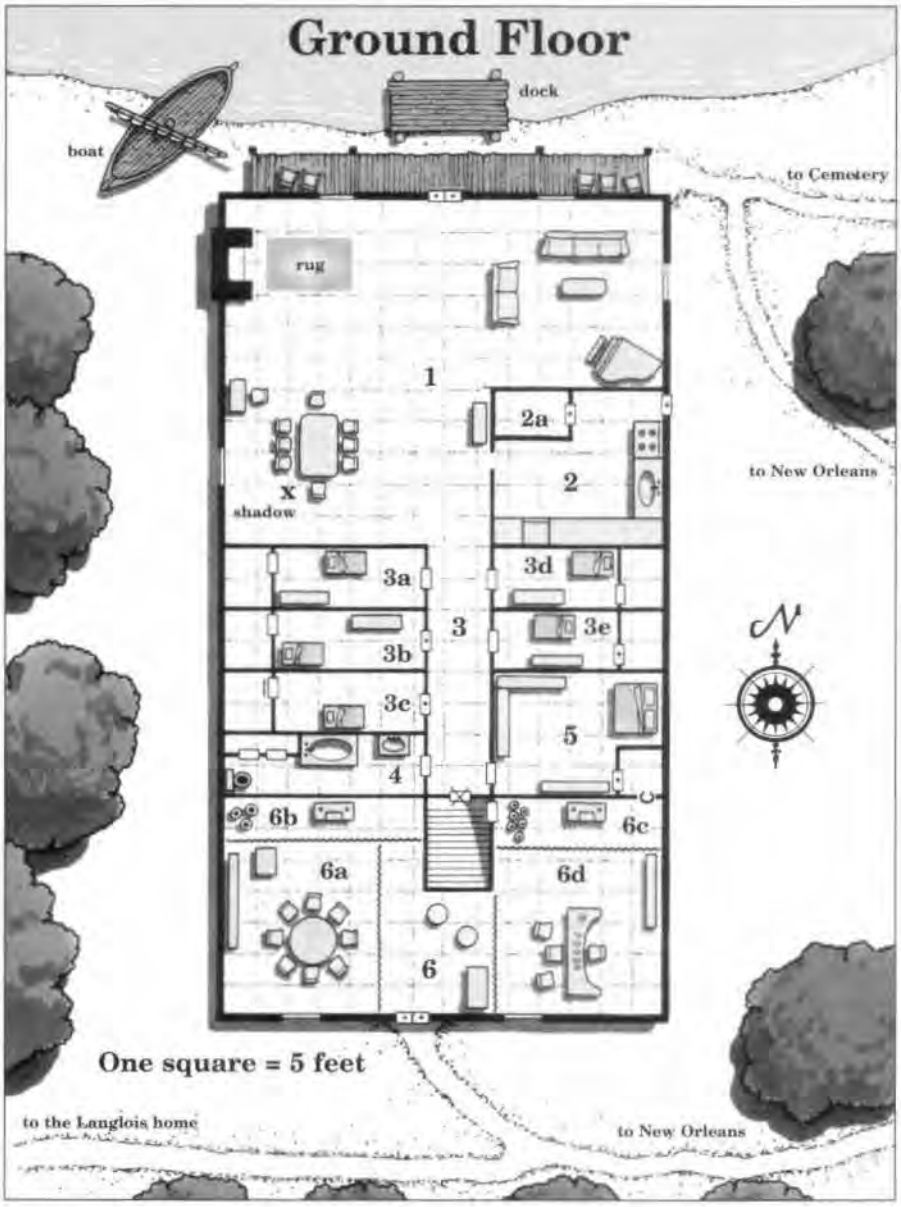
> Four evenly spaced doors flank either side of the hallway. At the end of the hall is a large door painted with white symbols and runes. The door is made of heavy oak and looks out of place in this Victorian home. Mounted on the east wall is a pair of antique crossed cutlasses, hung below a decorative silken sash.

The oak door at the far end of the hall is *wizard locked* and can withstand 200 hp damage from regular weapons. Without a *knock* or *dispel magic* spell, only the glass key contained in the chest in area **5** can unlock the portal.

One of the two swords displayed on the wall belonged to the notorious pirate Jean Lafitte. It acts as a *cutlass +1* (+2 when wielded aboard a ship) and allows its possessor to swim and breathe water. The cutlass glows with an ambient light upon command (15' radius).

3a. Bedroom. The mahogany bed in this room is covered in white mosquito netting, draped elegantly from the canopy. Flowery designs on the bedding and other linens signify this as a ladies' room. Near the poster bed is a table on which rests a wash basin and a dark yellow towel for drying. A chest lies nearby, a small padlock securing its contents. A large chest of drawers and a mirror are nestled against one wall. Most of the drawers are at least partially open and appear empty. There is a door at the far end of the room.

The door leads to a closet that contains miscellaneous women's clothing. The chest near the bed, if unlocked or forced open, contains extra linens and a few personal effects (brushes, hand mirrors, wooden combs, hairpins, and perhaps a brooch or two).



3b. Bedroom. Same as area **3a**, except the door to the room is locked.

3c. Bedroom. This room contains a bed and wash basin. The door to the closet is locked and barred from the inside by a metal latch. To enter, the door must be broken down or its hinges removed. Inside, the skeleton of a woman (not animated) lies in the far corner, her clothes tattered and rotting. She is lying over an unlocked chest. The chest holds linens and worthless personal effects.

The woman was Renée Richard (ren-AY ree-SHARD), one of Doctor

John's concubines. *Speak with dead* spells reveal that she took refuge in this closet on occasion, and it is here where she died after a severe beating at the hands of Doctor John, who wrongly believed that Renée had been possessed by evil spirits.

3d. Bedroom. Same as area **3a**.

3e. Bedroom. Same as area **3a**.

4. Bath Room. All the luxuries of a modern bathroom are here. Lining the walls are a table of soaps and towels, a sink, a bathing tub, and a toilet, all with water dropped in through the roof cistern. A closet in the northwest corner has two sliding doors. The closet contains towels, shaving utensils, soaps, and other mundane personal effects.

5. Master Bedroom. The polished mahogany double bed in this room is covered in white mosquito netting, draped elegantly from the canopy. The linens in this room are a stark contrast to the others. The silk sheets are black as night. Two tables flank the bed. A large chest lies nearby, a thick padlock securing its contents. In the northwest corner, hundreds of books line dozens of bookshelves. A massive chest of drawers and a mirror are arranged against one wall, blocking a door that appears to lead to the closet.

The chest at the foot of the bed is metal with a built-in lock protected by a poison needle trap (Type C poison; save at +1). Inside the chest, are several stacks of linen. The linens are a ruse to hide the false bottom. Inside this false bottom are $1,200 in small bills and a glass key. The key is protected by a *glassteel* spell and opens the door in area **3**.

The books are works from various writers of the time period. Virtually every mundane topic is covered. The DM is encouraged to add books that might serve as plot hooks for future adventures. Amidst the books is a scroll with the spell *cure disease* scribed on it.

The chest of drawers is locked but not trapped. The drawers contain Doctor John's fine clothes and other personal effects.

The closet is not only locked, but it is blocked by the chest of drawers. At the back of the closet is a concealed door that is plainly obvious to anyone looking through the clothing. The concealed door leads to area **6c**.

6. Magic Shop.

> This dusty room is enclosed by faded violet curtains. Three tables are arranged about the floor, upon which lie various Voodan charms.

Use the information from "Meeting Marie Laveau" to determine the items on these three tables. Since the items are standard Voodan fetish objects, the effects are the same, even though the exact design is left up to the individual creator.

If any of these items is stolen without being paid for, it magically teleports back to its original location within one round of actual theft. Some of the potions may be poisonous at the DM's discretion.

6a. Seance Table. A large table dominates this area, surrounded by eight chairs. In the center of the table lies an obsidian idol of a snake-man. A bookshelf lines the west wall, stuffed with books on dark magic as well as macabre tales of death and horror. A smaller table nearby holds candles of all shapes and sizes.

The snake-man idol is a depiction of the god Zombi. If sold to a collector, the idol could fetch up to $80.

A thorough search of the books reveals a scroll with the spell *invisibility to undead* (cast at 10th level). Currently, a bookworm is feasting on several tomes and might decide to alight on a character.

Bookworm: AL N; AC 2; MV 12, Br 3; HD ¼; hp 2; THAC0 nil; #AT nil; Dmg nil; SD camouflage; SZ T (1" long); ML 4; XP 15; *MM*/364.

6b. White Altar. This section of the room contains a white marble altar covered with cigars, alcohol, combs, brushes, lipstick, tobacco, and various old pictures and sketches of people. Stubs of burnt white candles can be found amid these items. The altar supposedly brings good luck by honoring dead relatives, although it does not radiate magic. Hidden in a secret compartment underneath the altar is Doctor John's spell book. It contains all the spells he has memorized plus an additional 1d8 first-level and 1d8 second-level spells.

Three clay urns rest on the floor in the northwest corner. The urns contain ashes of cremated family members.

6c. Black Altar. This area has an altar made of dark marble. The altar is covered in personal effects including playing cards, writing utensils, a pocket watch, a wallet, rings, and several sketches of people. A few dolls are also lying about. Stubs of burnt black candles are melted into the altar surface. Six empty clay pots block the entrance to a small door in the northwest corner, leading to an enclave under the stairs.

The enclave contains the skeletal remains of several reptiles including snakes and alligators.

6d. Fortunes Untold. This large section has a card-reading table and four chairs. On the table's surface are cards similar to the sets used by Voodan fortune-tellers. The cards are non-magical unless used by the seer to which they are attuned.

Bookshelves along the east wall contain a variety of books on mysticism. A few rare books contain information on evil qabals.

A Voodan card deck is mostly worthless to a non-Voodan. However, any Voodan would love to get her hands on this deck, as it is very powerful; it could be sold for as much as $500 to the right person.

A personal letter lodged in the cover of one book links Doctor John to an evil qabal known as The Six-Fingered Hand. It reads as follows:

> *I,*
>
> *Your vendetta against the Voodan witch is drawing undue attention and could compromise our activities in New Orleans and the surrounding vicinity. Be so kind as to resolve the matter in the appropriate fashion.*

The letter—dated March 1884—is stamped with the qabal's emblem: a skeletal, six-fingered hand. The DM may use this letter as an adventure hook by having PCs investigate this secret, evil qabal more thoroughly.

Second Floor

7. Hallway. Two ominous, 5' tall clay statues stand in this U-shaped hall. The easternmost statue depicts a grotesque snake-beast with reflective eyes. Inscribed on the base of the statue is the word "Zombi." The western sculpture resembles a man with snakes for hands, and whose teeth protrude like fangs from his mouth. The inscription at the base says "Damballah." The door leading to area **8** is inscribed with symbols and designs, written using white chalk.

The statues are religious figures in the pantheon of the dark magic worship. If pried loose and undamaged, the ruby gems in the eye sockets of the "Zombi" sculpture could fetch up to $500 each. However, mutilating the statue in this fashion might invoke a curse (determined by the DM). A *remove curse* spell cures the afflicted individual.

8. Cleansing Room. The door opens into a sparse room dominated by a clay statue depicting an elderly man with muscles. His kind face is a stark contrast to previous figures. Inscribed at the base of the statue is the word "Legba." Placed on pedestals against the west and east walls are two basins of water. The western water basin holds clear water; the water in the eastern basin is filthy and exudes a foul stench.

The western and eastern doors are locked. The clear basin contains holy water, enough for 20 vials if used sparingly. The fouled basin contains unholy water and causes 2d4 hp damage to any good PC who touches it. If Doctor John is slain, the contents of both basins evaporate within 24 hours.

9. Torture Chamber.

> Spread about the room are four coffins, oriented in various positions. Across the room from where you stand is a rack, a table lined of tools, and a chair with straps for the head and wrists. The northern end of this room has been turned into a cell; bars stretch along the entire width, stopping only for the locked gate at one end. Trapped within the cage is an animated skeleton that paces from one end of the cage to the other, still clothed in the fine apparel it wore in life. It does not acknowledge your presence in any way.

The skeleton is the remnant of a man who died here after Doctor John was transformed. He starved to death, forgotten. When he finally expired, his spirit did not realize it could leave the cell. As a result, it became bored and started its incessant pacing. It continues to pace until destroyed (AC 7, hp 6) or the cage door is opened. If the latter occurs, the bones collapse immediately, as the spirit leaves through the gate, free at last. Otherwise, the skeleton does not attack and, if blocked, stops pacing and stands motionless.

10. Conjuring Room.

> Five circle diagrams are etched on the floor in chalk. Standing in the center diagram is a hideously deformed man roughly 3' tall. He has bloated white skin, long black claws, sharp yellow teeth, and hideously protruding white eyes that drip vile liquids. His body is covered with carrion worms that appear to be feeding on him.
>
> In one of the adjacent circles, two indistinct shadowy forms hover at the diagram's boundaries. It would seem they are trying to leave, but they are trapped by some invisible force. Another of the circles has been smeared and broken. No creatures are confined in this circle, nor any of the others.
>
> In one corner stands a 5' tall clay statue of a giant man-weasel shown in a threatening pose. Carved lettering reveals this to be "Azaka."

Lurking in the shadows near the statue is a midnight cat. In her boredom, she broke one of the protection circles, releasing the shadow encountered in area **1**. If the PCs amuse her, she leaves them unmolested, but she stealthily follows them for entertainment. If attacked, she breaks the circle trapping the shadows, counting on them to waylay the PCs while she makes good her escape.

Cat, midnight: AL LE; AC 4; MV 18; HD 3+6; hp 18; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1d2/1d2; SA spirit drain, curse, rake with rear claws; SZ T; ML 12; XP 1,400; RAVENLOFT® *MC, Volume 3*/22.

The creature in the center protection diagram is a manes tanar'ri. It cannot escape the confines of its magical prison as long as the symbol remains intact, but it uses the party's ignorance of this fact to its advantage. The manes does not want to stay confined forever. The midnight cat has been taunting him for years, and the demon will likely attack the cat before turning on anyone else.

Manes: AL CE; AC 8; MV 6; HD 1; hp 6; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d4; SA acidic vapor; SD immune to mind-affecting spells; SZ S; ML 3; XP 975; PLANESCAPE® *MC Appendix 1*/103 (tanar'ri).

The other "occupied" protection diagram confines two angry shadows.

Shadows (2): AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 16, 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1; SA strength drain by touch; SD +1 or better weapons to hit; immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* and cold-based spells; SZ M; ML 19; XP 420; *MM*/312.

11. Alchemy Lab. The air in this chamber is putrid. The source of the foul stench appears to be a black cauldron near the room's center. The pot is surrounded by numerous tables, upon which rest scores of beakers, bottle, boxes, and other alchemical paraphernalia. Six books are stacked here and there.

The cauldron contains the rotting remnants of a ghastly stew. Lining the rim of the cauldron is a crystal ooze that lashes out at anyone who inspects the cauldron closely.

Crystal ooze: AL N; AC 8; MV 1, Sw 3; HD 4; hp 16; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 4d4; SA poison; SD blows inflict 1 point of damage; immune to acid, cold, heat, and fire; SZ M; ML 10; XP 420; *MM*/278.

The alchemical equipment represents a treasure trove to anyone with the alchemy proficiency. In their present condition, these items are worth almost $2,000 collectively.

The six books are written in a Haitian dialect. If translated, they reveal techniques for mummification, taxidermy, creating poison, conjuring extra-planar beings, creating golems, and animating zombies using special powders and chemicals instead of magical spells.

12. Mummification Room. From this area drifts a repugnant odor, not unlike burnt flesh. The air is musty, and the temperature seems several degrees higher.

Contained within this oddly-shaped chamber are ten coffins. Each coffin contains the mummified corpse of one of Doctor John's victims, enemies, or consorts.

The northwest coffin is enclosed by a wooden fence, and gathered inside the fence are six mangy crypt cats that attack anyone who disturbs the locked door leading to area **13**. Atop the coffin is a large grey lizard statue (actually a real lizard—see below).

The fenced-in coffin contains Doctor John's first consort, Serilia, now a mummy. She attacks if her coffin is disturbed, but she does not voluntarily leave this room under any circumstances. The lizard atop her resting place is Serilia's familiar, Keekor. The lizard is timid and only attacks in self-defense.

A macabre pile of bleached white skulls is stacked against the slanted wall. The skulls partially hide a locked door, which is noticeable to anyone examining the gruesome heap. The door leads to area **12a**.

Toward the north end of the room stands a 5' tall ebony statue depicting a slender woman carrying vines that entwine her lower torso. The etching on the base of this statue reads "Ezili" in a cursive script. The statue is non-magical and harmless.

A large portrait of Doctor John hangs on the north wall. Jostling the painting causes a secret door to slide open, allowing access to area **14**. The portrait is surrounded by a frame of polished gold.

Serilia (mummy): AL LE; AC 3; MV 6; HD 6+3; hp 38; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d12; SA fear, disease; SD hit only by magic weapons for half damage; immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* and cold-based attacks; SZ M; ML 15; XP 3,000; *MM*/261.

Crypt cats (6): AL CN; AC 7; MV 12; HD 1+1; hp 8, 7, 5, 5, 3, 2; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d2/1d2; SA disease, rear claw rake for 1d2/1d2; SZ T; ML 19; XP 120; *Monstrous Compendium, Volume 2*/26.

Keekor (lizard): AL LE; AC 8; MV 12; HD ¼; hp 2; THAC0 20; #AT nil; Dmg nil; SZ T; ML 13; XP 7. Slaying Keekor has no effect on the mummy.

12a. Zombies. Every zombie in this room has its soul imprisoned in area **14**. There are 25 zombies total, each one hideously mutilated and decayed. If the Kanari pots in area **14** have been destroyed, these zombies are reduced to lifeless corpses.

The walls are cinder black, as if scorched, but otherwise the room is featureless. The chamber smells of rotted flesh.

Zombies (25): AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; hp 6 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SD immune to cold-based and mind-affecting spells; SZ M; ML 20; XP 65; *MM*/373.

13. Pet Chamber. This chamber is painted completely green. Tropical plants are placed in pots throughout the room. Steam hangs in the air, covering the walls with droplets of moisture. An ornate stone fountain in the center of a raised, rectangular pool shoots water and steam several inches into the air. The pool itself contains the skeletal remains of several alligators and a number of coins. There are several smaller pools on the western side of the room, some of them filled with small animal remains (see area **13a**). Surprisingly, there is no stench of decaying flesh in this room, although the temperature is unpleasantly high.

The alligator skeletons are animate, and they lunge with surprising quickness (–2 to initiative). Hiding amidst the bones near the back of the pool is a sluggish alligator zombie.

Zombie alligator: AL N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 2; hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SD immune to cold-based and mind-affecting spells; SZ M; ML 20; XP 65; *MM*/373 (variant).

Skeletal alligators (5): AL N; AC 7; MV 24; HD 1; hp 8, 6, 5, 5, 2; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SD edged and piercing weapons inflict half damage; immune to poison and mind-affecting attacks; SZ M; ML 20; XP 65; *MM*/315 (variant).

Perhaps more deadly than the animated fauna are the green slimes that have taken up residence on the ceiling near the door. The ceiling's green color perfectly hides their presence, making them even harder to detect (10% chance per character).

Green slimes (3): AL N; AC 9; MV 0; HD 2; hp 12, 8, 5; THAC0 19; #AT 0; Dmg nil; SA dissolve metal and wood; SD not harmed by weapons and most spells; killed by *cure disease*; SZ S; ML 10; XP 65; *MM*/279.

In the far corner of the room is a swarm of wraith roaches—eerily silent beetles with ghostly white carapaces and gossamer wings. The swarm attacks a single target within 10 feet, draining one energy level with each successful attack. A victim drained of all levels dies and transforms into another swarm of wraith roaches (and cannot be raised). A victim who is not slain by the swarm regains lost levels at a rate of 1/day.

Wraith roach swarm: AL NE; AC 7; MV 9, Fl 12 (A); HD 2; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 1 per swarm; Dmg nil; SA energy drain; SD impervious to edged/piercing weapons; hit only by magical blunt weapons and spells; SZ T; ML 15; XP 975.

The fountain is a magical device connected to the Elemental Plane of Water. If toppled or removed, the magic ceases to function. Several coins have been tossed into the pool, including a gold Spanish doubloon worth about five dollars.

13a. Small Pets. These dried-up fonts contain the animated remnants of long dead animals: four zombie turtles, one zombie snake, two zombie lizards, and three zombie rats. These creatures attack only if someone comes within a couple of feet of them, and their target is in reach.

Small animal zombies (9): AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 1; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2; SD as zombie; SZ T–S; ML 20; XP 65; *MM*/373.

14. Kanari Containers.

Six levels of shelves spaced about a foot apart cover nearly every wall. Lining these shelves are containers—mostly clay receptacles—covered with handkerchiefs and surrounded by personal affects: pocket watches, combs, brushes, earrings, pins, rings, and the like.

A 6' tall stone statue of a dark, hooded skeleton stands in the middle of the room. The name "Guede" is carved into its base. The south and north doors have ropes hanging next to them.

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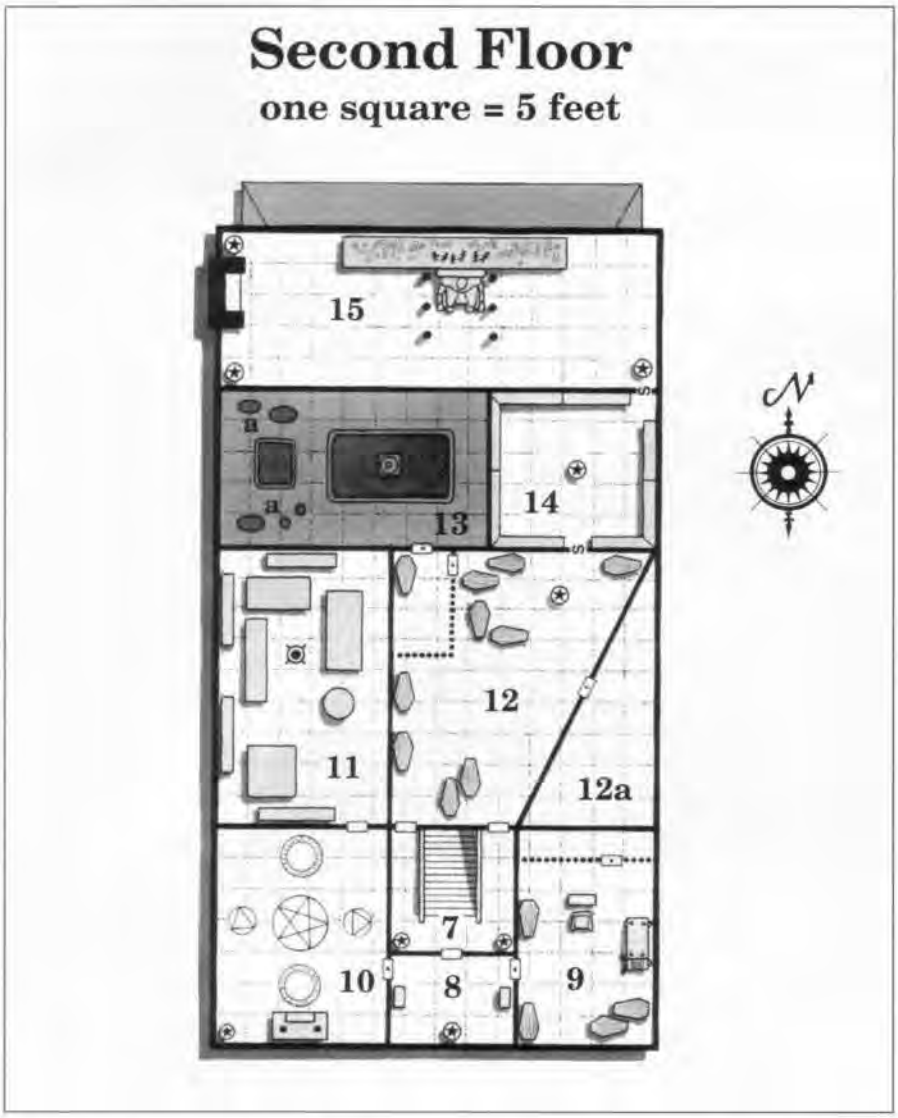

The clay receptacles are Kanari—containers holding enslaved spirits of the dead. To release a trapped soul, a person need only break the container or remove its cover. Should this happen, a ghostly apparition issues forth and departs.

One of these containers holds the trapped soul of Senité Dédé, the first American queen of dark magic. She now exists as a haunt, appearing as a will-o-wisp or a spectral image of her former self. If her spirit is not released immediately, Senité tries to possess the nearest character by first attacking with her Dexterity-draining touch. (See *MM*/186 for details.)

If she succeeds in possessing a PC, her first act is to use the character to destroy all the clay containers. Only then does she communicate with the other PCs. She apologizes for "borrowing" their friend's body. She tells the PCs that Doctor John lives behind the cemetery located east of the house. She also tells them what she knows about Doctor John's powers and weaknesses:

- In his battle with Marie Laveau, Doctor John was transformed by his own misfired magic into an alligator-man hybrid. He is somewhat resistant to magic but can still be harmed by non-magical weapons.
- Doctor John cannot bear to look at his image in a mirror or similarly reflective surface. He loathes his own grotesque appearance.
- Doctor John hates the cold and cannot endure magical cold.

Haunt: AL LN; AC 0 or victim's AC; MV 6/as victim; HD 5; hp 26/as victim; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg special or by weapon; SA special; SD silver or magical weapons to hit; weapons inflict 1 hp damage plus weapon's bonus; normal fire causes 1 hp damage/round; SZ M; ML 16; XP 2,000; *MM*/186.

15. Temple of Zombi.

Steam vapor hangs in the thick, musty air. The bones and fangs of a thousand snakes are scattered across the floor, causing an eerie crunching sound with every step as the bones crack and twist beneath your feet. Vines cover virtually every surface of this chamber, obscuring your view of the walls.

Two rows of marble columns carved in the likeness of giant pythons entwining up toward the ceiling flank a monstrous, 9' tall obsidian statue of a seated, skull-faced man with five serpents about his head. The statue's eyes are massive emeralds that sparkle in your light. Behind this ominous creation is an immense altar where scores of candles burn from one end to the other, though it would seem they drip no wax, for the surface of the altar is clean. Between several candles, you notice dolls that resemble yourselves!

A bas-relief wooden hanging adorns the area above the altar, carved into the likeness of a giant snake biting his own tail. Two clay statues flank the fireplace at the west end of the room, one depicting a grimacing short man with a tail, and the other representing a tall woman with a turtle's head. Another clay statue stands in the southeast corner—a faceless humanoid.

The name of each statue is etched into its base. The central figure is "La Grande Zombi," the tailed man is "Agwe," the turtle-headed woman is "Simbi," and the faceless statue near the secret entrance is "Samedi."

The doll effigies have not been fully "prepared." If they are handled roughly, feel free to ad-lib a few pains or itches on the PCs' bodies to add to

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Investigators behold the true terror of Bayou St. John.

the horror of the situation. A PC may destroy his own doll without suffering any pain or unpleasantness.

The altar is made of hollow wood stained black. It contains a 35' long undead python. Three rounds after the PCs enter the room, the snake slithers out (via a secret door in the eastern side of the altar) and attacks.

Undead python: AL CE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 6+1; hp 25; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4/2d8; SA constriction; SD as zombie; SZ L; XP 1,400; *MM*/320 (snake, giant constrictor).

The vines secrete a deadly poison (Type C) and are the source of the poison that killed the residents of New Orleans.

Four of the vines are actually young serpent vines being cultivated by Doctor John. They attack anyone who comes within five feet of them. PCs have a 5% chance of distinguishing the serpent vines from the normal vines. These serpent vines lack the innate spellcasting abilities of their larger brethren, attacking by constriction alone.

Young serpent vines (4): AL NE; AC 4; MV 15; HD 2; hp 12, 10, 8, 7; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA constrict for 1d4 hp damage/round; SD camouflage; SZ M (5' long); ML 12; XP 120; *MC Annual 2*/103 (variant).

The obsidian statue is virtually priceless, but the eye gems are worth $2,000 apiece. Attempting to remove the gems from the statue's eyes results in the animated attack of the three other statues in the room (the obsidian statue never animates) until the gems are returned to the eye sockets. The three statues fight until destroyed.

In the chest of each smaller statue is beating human heart. Any damage to a statue causes it to bleed; a horror check may be required should the PCs witness this. One hour after any animated statue is destroyed, the blood dissolves and its heart reverts to stone.

Animated statues (3): AL N; AC 5; MV 9; HD 5; hp 20 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+5; SZ M; ML 20; XP 420.

As long as the candles are within ten feet of the altar, they remain permanently lit without ever melting. If more than four candles are removed from the altar's surface, the enchantment ceases to function permanently. The candles magically control the room's temperature; without them, the vines die in 1d12+12 hours.

The secret door in the southeast corner can be triggered by pulling a rope made to look like a vine, hanging from the ceiling beside the door. The door slides to one side, allowing entrance to area **14**.

Doctor John's Lair

On the edge of the bayou, east of the residence, is a large cemetery surrounded by a broken wooden fence. The gravestones have partially sunken into the mire and now stand tilted at odd angles. Swarms of insects hover over the muddy graves.

If the PCs investigate the area beyond the cemetery, read or paraphrase the following:

> There are no insects in this part of the woods, but hot steam rises from the ground. The humidity in is almost unbearable.
>
> In the distance, you can see a freakish sight. A woman lies on an altar, surrounded by torch light. You recognize the woman as Marie Laveau. A bizarre looking alligator-man wearing a tattered business suit holds an ancient dagger, poised and ready to strike. Unless you interfere, it would seem she is about to die at the hands of this creature.

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Doctor John is performing a ritual to recharge his power. His dark complexion and gaunt, scarecrow-like frame are barely discernable in his present hulking form. For years, he has used his magic to avoid being completely transformed into an alligator. He now lives as a hybrid—vaguely human with a gator's jaws and tail. PCs who behold his hideous alligator leer must make a fear check or flee in terror.

Doctor John is not paying any attention to the characters, which gives them the first attack in addition to surprise. If Senité Dédé's haunt has taken possession of a PC, she invokes an ancient spell before relinquishing her host. The spell takes one full round to cast and duplicates the effects the first-level *bless* spell (lasts 6 rounds). This spell affects all PCs within a 50' cube centered on the caster. The host PC does not gain the benefit of the *bless* but is instead protected by the equivalent of an *aid* spell (lasts 15 rounds). Once the spell is cast, Senité's haunt departs.

If the PCs make attacks against Doctor John that do not kill or incapacitate him instantly, read or paraphrase the following:

> The gator-man whirls around, piercing you with his dark, hollow eyes. He snarls, "Do not interfere! I must have her power!"
>
> Six cypress treants suddenly move in to attack. The water around John's feet gurgles as four undead alligators crawl up out of the mire and stomp toward you. From the cemetery, you hear the sounds of undead creatures coming this way.

There are far too many foes for any one group of characters to handle, but the party has allies. A group of friendly oak treants has been waiting to reveal themselves. The eight oaks battle the cypress trees, while the characters do battle with Doctor John and his zombie alligators and one other foe, as yet unseen:

> All around you, the oak trees stir with life and begin battling the animated cypress trees. That leaves Doctor John and his undead alligators.

> But wait! A man steps from behind a nearby tree. It is Senator Broussard! His flesh is drawn, his suit tattered and mud-stained, and his eyes flicker red.

Doctor John (alligator-man): AL CE; AC 5; MV 6, Sw 12; Mystic 12; hp 40; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (bite), 1d12 (tail slap), or by spell; MR 10%; S 19, D 8, C 18, I 14, W 11, Ch 6; ML 15; XP 5,000; *gris-gris charm* (affords *protection from good*, 10' radius).

Spells: *chill touch, detect magic, read magic, wall of fog; detect good, spectral hand, stinking cloud, web; haste, hold undead, tongues, vampiric touch; contagion, enervation, solid fog, wizard eye; animate dead* (already cast), *magic jar, nightmare* (reverse of *dream*), *summon shadow; harm* (reverse of *heal*; already cast).

Doctor John casts a *haste* spell upon himself before lunging into melee. He has already cast his *harm* spell on Marie Laveau (reducing her to 2 hp) and cannot employ the spell in this encounter. If accosted from a distance, he casts his *spectral hand* spell, following up with his *vampiric touch* or *chill touch* spell. If the PCs flee, Doctor John casts his *summon shadow* spell and commands the shadows to hunt down the escapees. If reduced to 10 hp or fewer, John retreats into the bayou.

Remember that Doctor John's tattoos afford him 10% magic resistance, but otherwise he is susceptible to all normal weapons.

Senator Bill Broussard (juju zombie): AL NE; AC 6; MV 9; HD 3+12; hp 24; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 3d4; SD +1 or better weapons to hit; blunt and piercing weapons inflict half damage; immune to cold, *magic missiles*, electricity, and mind-affecting attacks; fire causes half damage; SZ M; ML 20; XP 975; *MM*/373.

Broussard continues to fight even after Doctor John is slain. The juju zombie is turned as a spectre.

Zombie alligators (4): AL N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 2; hp 15, 14, 11, 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SD immune to cold-based and mind-affecting spells; turned as normal zombies; SZ M; ML 20; XP 65; *MM*/373 (variant).

These zombies were created by Doctor John's *animate dead* spell.

Dark trees (6): AL NE; AC 0; MV 3; HD 10; hp 40 each; THAC0 11; #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 3d6/3d6 (limbs) or 4d6 (bite); SA *confusion*; grab; SD suffer only half damage from fire; –2 to save vs. cold-based attacks; SZ H; ML 16; XP 4,000; *MC Annual 1* (tree, dark).

Treants (8): AL CG; AC 0; MV 12; HD 12; hp 55 each; THAC0 9; #AT 2; Dmg 4d6; SA animate trees; SD never surprised; SZ H; ML 16; XP 14,000; *MM*/346.

Concluding the Adventure

If John is defeated, the dark trees disperse and the zombie alligators de-animate. John's body reverts to its hideously tattooed human form upon his death.

The death of Doctor John triggers a bizarre magical effect. The essence of the paraelemental creature trapped in Doctor John's icebox (area **2**) escapes, and the entire house is encased in crystalline ice within 2d4+2 rounds, eventually collapsing under its own brittle weight. Anyone inside the house during that time suffers 1d8 hp cold damage per round and suffers an additional 3d6 hp damage when the house collapses.

With the death of Doctor John comes recognition and fame. If Marie Laveau is returned safely to New Orleans, she quickly spreads word of the party's heroism and Doctor John's defeat. For a while, the PCs might enjoy celebrity status, perhaps earning an invitation to the Louisiana governor's home in the capital, Baton Rouge. A few weeks after news of this fantastic story reaches the nation's newspapers, the governor of Ohio, William McKinley, secretly contacts the group about heading a new secret organization dedicated to the investigation of the paranormal. Ω